



**Division of Animal and Food Industry Services
Food Safety Program**

Dear Food Establishment:

On March 17, 2020, Governor Northam and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Commissioner Oliver issued a Public Health Emergency Order to enforce a ten (10) patron limit in restaurants. This Order mandates that all VDH regulated restaurants and similar establishments in Virginia restrict occupancy to not more than 10 patrons at a given time.

It is the interpretation of the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS) that the order issued by the Governor and State Health Commissioner regarding the restriction limiting the number of patrons at restaurants and similar establishments to ten (10), also applies to similar establishments or activities as regulated by the VDACS Food Safety Program, including farmers' markets, areas at breweries wineries and distilleries that include tasting rooms, public taprooms, sit down seating areas within these facilities and any comparable retail operation such as convenience stores with food service and seating.

This directive does not include grocery stores, as they are deemed essential for retail food distribution to the general population.

VDACS is continuing to encourage all food establishments to be vigilant by emphasizing employee health, good hygiene and sanitation practices for employees. While COVID-19 is not spread by food, continued action should be taken to prevent the person to person spread of COVID-19 from an infected food worker to co-workers and/or customers.

Thank you for your cooperation regarding this important directive.

For questions related to the coronavirus, visit the Virginia Department of Health's website at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/>

Additional guidance can be found at:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

If you have questions please email the Food Safety Program at: foodsafety@vdacs.virginia.gov