

## COVID-19 Forest nursery practices and mitigation

April 2020

### Summary

The Forest nursery sector takes its responsibilities seriously during this current outbreak and is committed to working safely in accordance with government guidelines for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19), including social distancing and hygiene measures, and in accordance with all existing health and safety standards.

This document aims to identify the varied nursery activities required and work practices to enable them to continue, albeit at reduced capacity and work rate.

### Seed Supply

Both FC Alice Holt and Forestart report that seed despatch is able to continue as normal this spring.

Extended credit facilities on a case by case basis have been agreed with FC to help during tight cashflow.

Seed collecting may be more challenging than normal, especially for those species which seed in summer, due to travel and accommodation issues

### Nursery Operations

#### Grading of stock for 2020 planting and lining out

- Where grading is continuing, modifications have been made to partition workstations with clear one-way directions within sheds to ensure social distancing at all times. Handwashing stations are more plentiful and clearly located.



## **Dispatch and Delivery of stock for 2020 planting**

- Nurseries are using less operatives in combination with forklift trucks to load the trees into the lorries for dispatch. This is taking longer due to the fewer number of operatives, but it is maintaining output even though at a reduced rate and thus higher unit cost.
- To ensure social distancing between the haulier and the customer, some nurseries are now sending the delivery docket electronically by Whatsapp and asking customers to send a return message as proof of delivery.

## **Sowing (and bird netting)**

- April/May for sale 21/22 (already done those for sale 20/21)  
Many nurseries have stated that they will be able to proceed with this activity from May onwards as sowing is carried out using single operatives in tractors. Similarly, seedbed sterilisation can be achieved. The following precautions can be taken:
  - Cleaning of vehicles between operator change overs
  - Same operator sticking to the same vehicle
  - Wearing of PPE as necessary.
- For cell grown operations: machine sowing can be achieved by lengthening the sowing line to maintain distance between staff. Seeds can also easily be sown using broadcast method whilst maintaining distance. This is for alternative species and many are sown later in the summer.

## **Inserting Sitka Spruce Cuttings for cell grown**

- Now until end of May for sale 21/22
- Needs to be done now for bareroot transplant production. Can be done by spreading workers out in polytunnel to achieve social distancing guidelines. Will need lifting out of trays for lining out in late August.

## **Lining Out**

- From now for 20/21 dispatch  
This is viewed by most nurseries as the biggest challenge as lining out machine involves 5 operatives working in very close proximity in the lining out machine attached to the back of a tractor. This operation is recommencing with modifications made to the lining-out machine, incorporating plastic screens between a reduced number of operatives in each machine; or using teams of workers that live together already and managing them accordingly.

## **Transplanting/pricking out cell grown seedlings from broadcast trays**

- Now for 20/21, June for 21/22
- Labour intensive so needs extra staff but social distancing can easily be maintained.

## **Irrigation and fertiliser/pesticide application**

- This work is ongoing and can be done with very few staff and with social distancing for both bare root and cell grown operations
- All relevant nurseries bar FLS Newton are carrying out DNB spraying

## **Staffing Logistics**

### **Travel**

- In order to meet the social distancing requirements nursery operatives are travelling to work individually, and ideally not by public transport, where possible.
- When operatives live in the same household, they can travel to work together
- One option for nurseries is to use a mini-bus to bring operatives to work safely whilst ensuring the social distancing of 2m is kept between workers on the bus and the driver. PPE (face mask, face shield and gloves would be worn by all on board).
- When using shared vehicles wipe down steering wheel, hand brake, door handles and all other surfaces before and after use using anti-viral wipes.

### **Working Hours/Break areas/Canteen**

- Nurseries are managing shift patterns and breaks in line with recommendations.

## **General Worksite Safe Operating Procedures**

Other than covered above for specific nursery operations, please refer to industry advice on Site Management Guidelines [here](#), which covers:

- Self-Isolation
- Procedure if someone falls ill
- Travel to site
- Site access
- Welfare units
- General principles
- Avoiding close working
- Cleaning

**Site Work Management Guidelines Site Risk Assessments should be revised to reflect the Covid-19 safe working guidelines set out above and how they will be implemented taking account of the particular circumstances at each worksite.**