

# Fruit packhouse continues operations after Covid-19 scare

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A fruit packhouse in Ceres has continued its operations, under strict guidance and supervision of the Department of Health, after an employee tested positive for Covid-19.



Last week, GroundUp reported on workers at the Ceres Fruit Growers packhouse being screened after an employee tested positive. Archive photo from Facebook

GroundUp previously [reported](#) on employees at a fruit packhouse, Ceres Fruit Growers, that were sent into a panic after an employee tested positive for Covid-19. Ceres Fruit Growers has since confirmed that the employee's last day at work was on 7 April and that she tested positive on 14 April.

The Department of Health immediately started testing and screening employees at the company, according to Christo Janse van Rensburg, human resources manager at Ceres Fruit Growers.

According to the Department of Health Cape Winelands communications officer Sandra Maritz, in a case where an employee tests positive at their workplace, the department follows up with everyone they have had close contact with. Those who are symptomatic are tested and asked to self-isolate, whereas those without symptoms are also asked to stay at home. If the latter develop symptoms, they are also tested. All of those who test negative can then return to work.

The employee and her husband, who also works at Ceres Fruit Growers, were immediately placed in isolation, according to Janse van Rensburg.

Janse van Rensburg said that they have been engaging with the Department of Health on a daily basis in order to manage the situation. “We have intensified all hygienic practices and precautionary measures in collaboration with the Department of Health,” he said.

## **Factory decontamination**

Maritz said that the Department of Health ensures that the factory is decontaminated and that all identified employees are placed in quarantine. “The Department of Labour is the designated authority to decide if a factory can open,” said Maritz.

The Department of Labour did not respond to queries at the time of publication, however the department was on the premises of Ceres Fruit Growers on 15 April for inspections.

Daniel Johnson, spokesperson for Minister of Agriculture in the Western Cape Ivan Meyer, said that the Department of Agriculture has been providing support services to various agricultural stakeholders across the province, such as providing farm workers with face masks and sanitisers.

“The department handed over 1,000 face masks to Ceres Fruit Growers for use by workers,” said Johnson.

GroundUp previously reported that employees were placed in a hall for screening. They were given masks but there was a lack of social distancing.

Ceres Fruit Growers has since confirmed that while personnel from the Department of Health were on their way to the premises, “employees themselves decided to wait in the hall adjacent to the screening area”. A manager of the company then instructed them to wait outside and maintain a safe distance.

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