

Haggard on China-HK COVID Situation

SPEAKERS

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While most Asian countries are gradually easing social distancing restrictions and taking more of a living with COVID approach to the pandemic, there are notable exceptions in Hong Kong and some areas of China. U.S. Meat Export Federation, senior vice president Joel Haggard, who is based in Hong Kong, has more details in this USMEF report.

Joel Haggard

Local authorities are stating that they want to continue to follow a COVID-zero goal but it looks like the city's abandoned a plan it had to test every Hong Kong resident for COVID three times over a period of nine to ten days and that was to start at the end of March. During that testing period, the plan was to ask residents to shelter in place to help break transmission chains. But daily cases have been so high that even the resolute Hong Kong government has decided that pushing the entire population into community testing centers is impractical. So where does this leave our meat business here in Hong Kong? Despite glimpses of easing, strict social distancing measures remain in place at least till April 20th. Hong Kong regulations require all restaurant outlets to close by 6pm and no more than two diners are allowed per table. So Hong Kong's restaurant sector is reeling right now, and hundreds of outlets have closed, takeaway and retail are thriving, but supply chain issues there have slowed the delivery of foodstuffs to the public. Across the border in China, mainland authorities are on a knife edge about increasing COVID cases there. Although it's only several thousand new confirmed cases per day, we're seeing new lockdowns being put in place in cities in the southern tip of China to its northern provinces. As of several days ago there are approximately 50 million residents of major cities under strict stay at home orders. Another 40 million are in some form of partial lockdown, so this is affecting meat imports in several ways. First, in those cities with strict lockdowns, visiting restaurants is not possible. And the second impact is on the movement of imported meat from ports to central warehouses and then out to end users creating a net negative for overall meat consumption and imports. Everyone's hoping this wave will be short term and that normalcy will return soon.

Joe Schuele

For more information, please visit [USMEF.org](https://usmef.org). For the U.S. Meat Export Federation, I'm Joe Schuele.