



Edwards and Ward statement about the new Corona virus- Covid-19

3rd March 2020

### **Background Information**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new respiratory illness that has not previously been seen in humans. The virus was first detected in China and has since spread to several other countries, with over 90,870 confirmed cases so far across 73 countries, and 50 cases currently confirmed in the UK.

Symptoms include a fever, dry cough and shortness of breath- the infection rarely causes a runny nose or sneezing. Around one-in-five cases are thought to be severe, which may result in more serious symptoms.

The current evidence suggests the incubation period lasts between 1 and 14 days. The main routes of transmission have been identified as:

- direct contact to face, eyes and nose from droplets spraying from an infected person onto another person.
- contamination via droplets from sneezing and coughing landing on surfaces and then transferring via hands on to eyes and nose.
- contamination of hands from sneezing or coughing and then transfer to others (handshakes) or on to surfaces to be picked up by others by their hands and transferred to their eyes or nose.

At present, there is no evidence that products imported from China could pose a risk of infection. Currently there has been no change or official guidance announced by the government regarding food regulations and the Covid-19 for the UK/EU.

The World Health Organisation has not classified the outbreak as a pandemic but has raised its global risk assessment level to 'very high'.

In the UK, the Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the public from low to moderate, although this does not mean that they believe the risk to individuals has changed at this stage. Health professionals are currently working to contact anyone who has been in close contact with people who have Covid-19 and are escalating planning and preparation in case of a more widespread outbreak.

### **What are Edwards and Ward doing?**

We take both the safety of the products we supply and our people incredibly seriously.

To-date, Edwards and Ward have had no confirmed cases of individuals being infected with the virus.

We have also not seen any significant supply shortages due to COVID-19, other than a recent surge in demand for previously low-selling products such as hand gels, sanitisers, face masks and wipes.

However, we are putting in contingency plans to guide our actions should the outbreak and its impact continue to spread across the UK and globally.

The scope of this plan covers the precautions and actions necessary to contain the risk of illness, as far as is practical, to Edwards and Ward staff, and to restrict any impact on operations, and to ensure continuity of service to customers.

In line with this, and with government advice, we are continuing to monitor, plan and respond to the risk by taking the following steps:

With employees and their managers, we have updated employees across our sites, advising them to take preventative measures in order to limit the risk of transmission.

Specifically, this advice covers steps to take to ensure the highest standards of hygiene across our sites and our employees, along with advice to those travelling to and from affected areas, specifically for those who have returned to the UK from:

- any of the 'lock-down areas' i.e. Hubei province in China, Iran, lockdown areas in northern Italy and special care zones in South Korea
- 'higher risk areas' currently classed as other parts of mainland China or South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan or Thailand in the last 14 days or other parts of northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini), Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar or Vietnam since 19 February.

Edwards and Ward are in constant contact with our core suppliers to ensure continuity of supply for customers. Our core range is constantly being reviewed to assess any level of risk to products, taking a similar approach to that which we used last year to plan for a possible no-deal Brexit.

The review takes into account: - country of origin of each product (based on information provided by our suppliers) - the importance of the product to customers (e.g. key ingredient on menus vs flavour variant of impulse product) - the criticality of the product to sectors which have a duty of care.

As this is a constantly changing and challenging situation, we are proactively planning ahead and closely following updates from the WHO, Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

As a contingency for staffing we will utilise our mobile team and use agency as needed.

We will continue to update you as the situation changes or further information becomes available.

Chris Carr-Barney

Commercial Director