

Friday Feedback for Friday, March 27, 2020

Information for Field turn Phone Enumerators – Morris

We understand that some enumerators are nervous and anxious about transitioning from personal enumeration to telephone enumeration during this time of social distancing. One good resource that we found on the nasda.org website is a pair of training videos which will help walk a field enumerator through switching to calling respondents on the phone (for now). Quick access to the videos, as well as documentation with tips on conducting telephone interviews, has been posted to the GLR website and can also be accessed at this [LINK](#).

Updated Cell Phone Reimbursement Rules – Price

On March 25, NASDA sent a memo to all enumerators announcing that enumerators now can claim cell phone charges each period they are assigned telephone enumeration work. A copy of the memo has been posted to the GLR Website and can be accessed [HERE](#).

What to Do with Forms that have No Phone Numbers – Miyares

As you are aware, many of the forms we send to the field for enumeration have no phone number to begin with, and yet, enumerators are not permitted to do personal visits to farmers at this time. Those records with no phone numbers are being left as available in CAPI on your iPad so that if/when the moratorium on field enumeration is lifted we can still possibly complete those forms before the end of the data collection period. RFO staff are also searching for phone numbers for these operators so if numbers are found, or if you are able to obtain phone numbers through your own research, these can be attempted by phone. As a reminder, forms left as truly inaccessible at the end of a survey cycle do not need to be submitted in CAPI, as they can be auto-coded as inaccessible by systems in the office.

Upcoming Survey Due Date Reminders – Collom/Courser

Don't forget that Monday March 30 is the last day to submit records into CAPI for the [Organic Production Survey](#), the [Michigan's Fruit and Berry PDI Surveys](#), and the [Prices Paid Surveys](#). The system will lock down after 11:59 p.m. on Monday night, so be sure to communicate with your supervisor about any records that you are going to "Save for Review" so that they can go through "Final Submission" before the midnight deadline.

ARMS III – Erickson

Nothing has really changed since last week for us. If you have completed forms, be sure they are being sent to your supervisor who will still review them but will hold on to them for the time being. The exception to this rule is for records sent to you by the NASDA Coordinators because expenses were missing. Those forms need to be returned to your NASDA Coordinator for processing. Guidance will be provided for supervisors on what to do with those completed forms by the NASDA Coordinators.

June Area Update – Miyares

We have received some questions from the field asking about what will happen with the June Area Survey. At this time, all June Area Survey plans are on hold, including pre-survey preparation and mini-schools. More information will be provided as it becomes available. We appreciate your patience and your understanding.

Farm Market Manager Survey Update – Miyares/Dothage

Late last week, we received word that the regional call centers NASS used would be closing until at least April 3 and that all survey work scheduled during that time needed to be diverted to field enumerators to be phoned locally. In the rush to get materials out to the field, the enumerator memo which accompanied the National Farmer Market Managers Survey (NFMMS) was not updated to reflect the current situation. There are two major changes

to the way the survey is being locally administered that have been noted in this updated [MEMO](#) that can be found on the GLR website.

- Due to the unexpected diversion of samples from the call centers to the field, there were not enough blank NFMMS forms available to provide labeled paper questionnaires to all who needed them. The forms that were shipped to enumerators on March 17 were labeled, but that was when we thought we would only be handling 200 forms locally and not 1000 forms. We had only ordered 400 blank forms to begin with.
- Due to limited staffing available to process paper questionnaires at this time, we are asking that all survey data be entered and submitted through CAPI for all reports, (completes, refusals, out-of-business, inaccessible, etc.). This would include any forms you may have received that were labeled previously.

We apologize for the oversight and for any confusion that this may have caused. Please contact your supervisor or your NASDA Coordinator if you have any questions.

Passing of Former Indiana State Statistician – Reynolds

The Great Lakes Region is saddened to report that Earl Park, the Indiana State Statistician from 1970 to 1986, passed away on March 23 at the age of 100. A full obituary can be found on this [SITE](#).

Saying Hello – Cooper

This week, the Great Lakes Regional Office welcomes Wes Cooper. He is from Hagerstown, MD and spent his entire life in Maryland prior to joining us in Michigan. He plans on working on a variety of projects including the Ohio Crop Weather report, the Monthly Ag Yield Survey, and ARMS II. This is his first time working with NASS, however he previously interned with other federal government agencies. He is a 2015 graduate of Towson University with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and a 2017 graduate of the University of Baltimore with a Master's Degree in Global Affairs. He also has several interests outside of work, including playing the guitar, writing, and reading.

Saying Farewell – Matli

In the February 14 edition of Friday Feedback, we reported that Greg Matli, Indiana State Statistician, would be retiring effective March 27. Greg's planned retirement party on March 28, 2020 has had to be cancelled by the venue due to the Coronavirus and associated need to social distance. We did ask Greg if he wanted to share anything on his last day with NASS:

"We appreciate everyone who planned on joining us. Although we will not have an opportunity to celebrate with you we feel your love and support. Our thoughts and prayers are with each of you as we all work together to keep one another healthy.

"It's hard to say good bye or farewell. I just wanted to let everybody know that it has been a very fun adventure during my time here in Indiana and The Great Lakes Region. I have enjoyed working with all you during our time together. It just goes to show that with best planning one must remain flexible to change. Take care, and thanks for all your hard work."

Greg's contact information:

gregmatli@yahoo.com

765-586-2091

Keeping your iPad Clean – Laird

We've had some folks express worry about how one can properly disinfect one's iPad. The apple.com website states that using a 70 percent isopropyl alcohol wipe or Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, you may gently wipe the hard, nonporous surfaces of your Apple product, such as the display, keyboard, or other exterior surfaces. Don't use bleach. Avoid getting moisture in any opening, and don't submerge your Apple product in any cleaning agents. Don't use on fabric or leather surfaces. For more information, review this [ARTICLE](#).

Friday Feedback for Friday, March 20, 2020

Short Term Data Collection Strategy Changes – Hurlbut/Kalaus/Johnson

Many of you have already seen the notice from NASDA, from the GLR home page, or from your supervisors about major changes in data collection strategies that will be necessary in order to meet our mission. Summarizing, here is what we know:

- Effective March 18, field enumerators should call survey respondents by phone and stop all in-person meetings and interviews until April 3, 2020. This timing will be reevaluated to ensure the ongoing health and safety of employees and respondents.
- When survey assignments cannot be completed by phone, enumerators should encourage respondents to complete the survey online and offer to help them fill-in the online instrument.
- Effective March 19, NASS Data Collection Center (DCCs) phone/office enumerators should suspend their phone-calling work with survey respondents until April 3rd. This timing will be reevaluated to ensure the ongoing health and safety of employees. Phone/office enumerators should not report to work at DCC office locations.
- Survey assignments normally conducted through DCCs will be shifted, as appropriate and needed, to field enumerators.
- Until further notice, telephone enumerators may no longer call from the office.

Over the next few days, the Regional Field Office will be pushing out additional assignments to be phoned from the field for the surveys taking place during the second half of March into early April, including Fruit PDI, Berry PDI, April Milk Production, April Colony Loss, the Census of Horticulture, the Organic Production Survey, and the Farm Market Manager Survey. Given that Cash Rent and April Labor phoning won't start until late April, we will reevaluate the need to push more work to the field after April 3. We will not be sending out updated listings or additional blank questionnaires unless absolutely needed.

All of us will continue to keep you informed as we monitor the pandemic situation. Your patience and understanding are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your remarkable commitment and flexibility as we work through this together. Please contact your immediate supervisor if you have questions.

Contacting the Regional Field Office – Hurlbut

During this time of “social distancing” many of the Field Office staff, including the NASDA Coordinators, are working from home; however, please know that people are still working and are able to receive e-mail and phone messages at their normal e-mail addresses and phone extensions during normal business hours. Additionally, the Regional Field Office is not closed, and there are a handful of people in the office every day who can assist if you require materials to be sent to you that are only available in the field office to be sent to you. In this rapidly changing situation, we are doing our best to maintain a level of continuity in our operations that you have come to expect. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your NASDA Coordinator.

UPS to Continue as Normal -- Hurlbut

Discussions have taken place with our UPS contacts to be sure there are no avoidable interruptions in service. No changes are currently needed in how we send or receive our UPS shipments.

Michigan Fruit and Hops Survey – REVISED FACE-TO-FACE Data Collection Plan – Saffell/Laird

All phone method questionnaires will be handled the same. Mail, phone, enumerate samples should be attempted via phone if possible and should not be sent back yet even if a phone interview is not attained. Mail, enumerate only forms are now to be called. Again, if a phone interview is not obtained, do not send the forms back (unless it is an obvious refusal). If PRD/Block printouts exists for an operator, we can mail it to him or her if they so desire.

ARMS III – Erickson

Many enumerators are probably asking the question, “If I can’t do face-to-face enumeration, what am I supposed to do with ARMS III?” At this point, just sit tight. If we can resume field enumeration by April 3, we still will have plenty of time to complete surveys before they are due. If you have any current appointments with operators, try to reschedule them for after April 3. We haven’t gotten a lot of new information from our HQ as to extensions or anything like that, but as we learn more, we’ll let you know.

A few general reminders about the ARMS:

- Remember that any non-responses and out-of-business records should be submitted on the iPad (with comments). The front page of the paper questionnaire should then be torn off and destroyed/shredded and the rest of the questionnaire can be recycled. Please do not send blank questionnaires or cover pages of those forms back to the field office.
- We have just received word that **the National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, IN is closing, so please DO NOT send any forms to Jeffersonville at this time.** If you have completed forms, be sure they are being sent to your supervisor who will still review them but will hold on to them for the time being. The exception to this rule is for records sent to you by the NASDA Coordinators because expenses were missing. Those forms need to be returned to your NASDA Coordinator for processing.

Thanks to everyone for all of their hard work on this year’s ARMS. Despite the frustrations, we’ve actually been doing fairly well in getting the work in and done, so we’re not going to be in that bad of shape as we lose some data collection time here.

Farm Market Manager Survey Plan Changes – Miyares/Dothage

Although field/phone enumeration for the National Farm Market Manager Survey isn’t scheduled to begin until April 7, we are going to be pushing records to the field for assignment at this time in the event that the call centers are not able to get back up to capacity by April 3. It is possible, however, that any new assignments being pushed to the field at this time may get pulled back to the call centers if the call centers are able to take the work before April 7.

For those enumerators working the National Farm Market Manager Survey (NFMMS), the original plan was to have those forms completed on paper and shipped via UPS to the NOD for keying and scanning. However, in looking at what would need to be done to take all of the call center work and potentially push it to the field for local calling, we realized that we do not have enough extra blank questionnaires in the RFO to allow for everyone to have labeled forms. To that end, we are going to have to shift all data collection to CAPI for this survey. The blanks you were provided can still be used, but data should be submitted, when completed, on the iPad in order to conserve the limited number of questionnaires available. If you are assigned NFMMS forms to complete and never got any blanks because you weren’t expecting to work the survey, then you can be sent a limited number of blank forms to assist with data collection. Please contact your NASDA Coordinator if you have any questions.

Friday Feedback for Friday, March 13, 2020

Please send an email to SM.AS.FOD.GLR.Releases@usda.gov or reply to the Friday Feedback e-mail message. We are trying to gauge how many enumerators are reading Friday Feedback. Thanks!

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Alert – Hurlbut

Coronavirus is having a drastic impact on NASS business. Please be alert and in-touch via your communication network. It is important that you know the following:

- Travel and workshops have been canceled. The NASDA Supervisor workshop scheduled for April 7-8 has been canceled. State June Schools are also canceled and the current plan is to hold mini-schools. Keep in mind that things are changing rapidly, but we are committed to doing the most preparatory work and training through alternative channels.
- Avoid personal visits to collect data, use the phone as much as possible. If a personal visit is needed, do not make contact until an agreement to do so has been made by telephone. Call first and get permission to visit.
- Keep lines of communication open. NASDA Coordinators, NASDA Supervisors and Enumerators should establish a network of information sharing immediately. This situation is constantly developing. To ensure the safety of NASS and NASDA staff, as well as respondents, information will come out as it is available and must be disseminated quickly. Please be sure to stay in communication with your supervisors and pay attention to both your gmail and the GLR website so you can remain informed on the most up-to-date information to changes and survey programs.

Above all, stay safe. Follow guidelines from your local and state leaders. Please check your local situation often.

Census of Horticulture – Collom

We have identified approximately 100 matches between Census of Hort and the Ag Labor survey. These surveys will be sent to you on paper next week via UPS. The Census of Horticulture due date has been extended to May 4 to accommodate the matches. This includes any Census of Hort that were not yet checked in that you have received previously. Please bear in mind that Floriculture and Horticulture operations will be getting very busy soon. Please get out and make contact with these operations as soon as possible. Ag Labor matches can be contacted beginning Apr 20. Other operations should be contacted NOW if you have not already been in contact with them.

Organic Production Survey Update – Courser/Samson

Due to the noted problems with the CAPI system in recent weeks, we have been able to extend data collection for the Organic Production Survey for two additional weeks. The last day to submit Organic Surveys through CAPI is now Monday, March 30 by 11:59 p.m.

UPS Protocols

Due to the increasing costs of shipping materials via UPS, we are going to need to change some of the ways the transfer of materials back and forth to the Regional Field Office are handled.

- Where possible, shipments from the Regional Field Office to field enumerators with survey information will be limited to once per month around the 20th of each month.
- If an enumerator is requesting materials or supplies from the field office that are not time sensitive, shipments of the supplies will be coordinated with the monthly packages. In the alternative, if something small is needed (additional blank questionnaires), and no PII is involved and no tracking on the package is required, then we may send out materials using a brown manila envelope to ship materials out using the US Postal Service.
- If you see that you are running low on UPS labels to ship materials either back to the Regional Field Office in East Lansing, to the National Operations Division in St. Louis or to the National Processing Center in

Jeffersonville, please request those additional labels before you run out of them so that the shipment of those labels can be coordinated with the monthly packages.

- Whenever possible, enumerators should not be sending any UPS packages that only have a single piece of paper in them to the Regional Field Office. The cost for sending those packages is the same whether they have one piece of paper or three pounds of materials. To that end, if there are out-of-business forms or NACS forms being completed that need to come back to the office, they should be sent in packages that have other materials in them. If the information is time-sensitive, then consider relaying the information on the NACS or Out-of-business form to the office by phone, then send them all to us at the end of the survey cycle in a single package.
- If you have something small that needs to come back to the office that doesn't have PII and doesn't require tracking, enumerators can be provided Business Reply Envelopes to send such materials using the US Postal Service to East Lansing.
- There should be no use of UPS Overnight/Express labels unless given permission from your NASDA Coordinator.

While there will need to be exceptions to these rules at different times of the year or for different projects (June Surveys and Objective Yield come to mind), there are many steps that we can all take to make sure that our shipping costs do not go so high that we are unable to do our survey work. Please contact your NASDA Coordinator if you have any questions.

Upcoming Due Dates and Deadlines - Miyares

Please be mindful of upcoming due dates for March Surveys:

- Hog Report: Callouts March 6, Last Day to Submit is March 13 by 11:59 p.m.
- Agricultural Survey (Crops APS): Last Day to Submit is March 17 by 11:59 p.m.
- Organic Production Survey, Fruit PDI, Berry PDI: Last Day to Submit is March 30 by 11:59 p.m.

Friday Feedback for Friday, March 6, 2020

March Hog Due Date Extension –Courser/Erickson

Due to ongoing issues with the CAPI system and a shift in timeline from HQ, the due date for the March Hogs Survey has been extended. Please continue your data collection efforts through **Friday, March 13 @ 11:59 pm**. Thank you for your continued outstanding work on this important survey.

Handling Out-of-Business Records that Turn Up like a Bad Penny – Miyares

It's the end of the month, you just got your UPS package from the Regional Field Office and your assignments have shown up on your iPad. As you review them, you see an operation that you know you have submitted an out-of-business form on in the past, or have at least put comments on indicating that they don't have the item of interest anymore, and you are asking yourself, "Why is this guy still in my survey listings?"

There are several possible reasons for this to happen:

- If no paper Out-of-Business form was ever received in the office, and no detailed comments were ever put into CAPI, then we won't have a record that the operator was out of business
- Even when requests are put in to the Frames Maintenance Group (FMG), we don't always see or know what they do with those requests unless we follow up with a deeper request.
- Sometimes FMG declines the request to put a farm out of business because
 - They want to know who took over the farm, or
 - There is some evidence out there that they really are still operating (i.e., 2020 wheat or alfalfa that was already signed up in their name with FSA)
 - There are questions about the potential presence of livestock (especially horses) on the operation
 - They still have some CRP land that they are receiving government payments for (so even though they are retired from active farming, they can't be dropped outright),
 - The target name is receiving at least a fifty percent share of some crop that has been registered with FSA

In many cases, we realize that even if an operator needs to still be technically active on our list frame, that doesn't mean we need to send out surveys to these operators knowing that they either aren't actively farming or at a minimum don't have the items of interest we're asking about. Regional Field Office staff have developed improved procedures to help flag operations like this so that we don't need to burden respondents who will keep telling us that they don't have anything, and we've improved our procedures so that comments entered into CAPI are reviewed in a more timely manner so that comments in ELMO should be updated by the time the next survey cycle begins. The system still isn't perfect though, and with a thinner office staff, things slip through the cracks, so we appreciate your patience.

So what should you do if one of these operations comes back out to the field? First, review your sample before data collection begins and check the record-level comments to see if there is some explanation as to why they had to be kept in business and why we're still trying to contact them. If the comment isn't clear enough, work with your supervisor to contact the Field Office to get more clarification. We may end up agreeing that there is no point to contact the operator, or we may realize that there is something which needs clarification before we can drop the record outright. If we have a better understanding, we may be able to update the comment so that there is no question as to how the record should be handled in the future.

Please know we appreciate your hard work and we understand your frustration. By working together, we will make sure that we have the best and most accurate list frame for our region's farms.

Upcoming Due Dates and Deadlines - Miyares

Please be mindful of upcoming due dates for March Surveys:

- Hog Report: Callouts March 6, Last Day to Submit is March 13 by 11:59 p.m.
- Organic Production Survey: Last Day to Submit is March 16 by 11:59 p.m.
- Agricultural Survey (Crops APS): Callouts March 11, Last Day to Submit is March 17 by 11:59 p.m.

2019 NASDA Field Enumerator of the Year - Morris

The 2020 NASS Awards for Excellence Ceremony will be held on April 15th. Congratulations to Ohio field enumerator, Jon Yackey, one of only five nationwide to win this award.

Daylight Savings Time Reminder

Love it or hate it, our annual ritual of early March is coming this weekend. Daylight Saving time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday March 8 so those of us who still have clocks that don't automatically change will need to move them forward by one hour. We will go back to Standard Time on Sunday morning November 1.

