



Provision of Elective/Non-Urgent Veterinary Procedures

Dear ,

During COVID-19, many jurisdictions have defined essential veterinary activity as emergency care, urgent care, and care that protects the food supply or public health. In turn, veterinarians have appropriately exercised their professional judgment as what services fall within these categories. As a consequence, wellness exams and other important treatments have been postponed.

We know that animal and human health are intricately tied together and not providing comprehensive veterinary services puts the public as well as animals at risk. This is true regardless of whether the animals are companion animals, horses, food animals, or zoo animals. Initial forecasts drove these decisions. Perhaps it's time for regulatory boards and other authorities to consider if restrictions may be relaxed. Some factors to consider regarding non-urgent/elective services visits include the following:

- First, fears of shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) for human health providers understandably caused elected officials to restrict veterinary activities to preserve PPE for worse conditions. Fortunately, this situation has improved dramatically for the PPE most commonly used in veterinary practice, and human healthcare does not require supplies from veterinary sources. The original concern that performing non-urgent/elective veterinary

procedures would negatively impact the availability of PPE for human healthcare providers has been ameliorated.

- Second, experts say it's important to know that cases of pets acquiring coronavirus are very rare. In the world, as of this date there are only three confirmed cases of domestic cats and two confirmed cases of dogs getting sick. The CDC says there is no evidence at this time that the disease could spread in the opposite direction - from pets to humans.
- Third, veterinary practices have found creative and effective ways to practice social distancing, while continuing to provide services. These include 6-foot spacing between individuals, curbside pick-ups, clinic leashes, appointment requirements to manage overflow, dividing staffing into teams, and face masks. Practices also are utilizing various features of telemedicine to triage patients and when in-person visits are not warranted.

The current pandemic situation could go on for some time. Every sector of commerce is having to modify practices to incorporate health safety measures for the long term. Veterinary services are no different. We're seeing evidence that veterinary practices have been modified to provide for the health and safety of veterinary medicine professionals, clients and patients. With guidance from regulatory boards and councils, veterinary clinics can be looking at the foreseeable future and institutionalizing these practices for the duration of the pandemic. A list of best practices during the pandemic is available on the AVMA website:

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>.

Thank you,

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