



Revised April 16, 2020

## Alberta Veterinary Practices – Accessing Veterinary Care during COVID-19

The ABVMA recognizes that veterinary practices provide essential services to maintain the health and welfare of animals in the province. The ABVMA is working to ensure that veterinary services remain available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alberta veterinarians and veterinary technologists are committed to providing care in these unprecedented times. Veterinary practices are taking steps to ensure public health is protected and we are asking for your patience and understanding. There is a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Veterinary practices may need to postpone elective procedures or [implement some changes to how services are delivered](#).

This may include providing certain consultations by electronic means where appropriate.

Veterinary practices may be reducing hours or appointment availability as staff availability permits. Veterinary practices may be requesting that you take certain precautions when attending at a veterinary practice and request that you observe Alberta Health Services directions for self-isolation if you have travelled or if you are sick. This will help protect veterinary professionals and staff and ensure continued availability of services.

**Our goal is to ensure that non-elective and emergency veterinary medical services are available when needed.**

## Animals in Canada

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, there is currently no evidence to suggest that any animal native to Canada (wild, livestock or pets) harbours the virus that causes COVID-19.

It is possible that some types of animals can be infected with COVID-19 but there is no evidence that pets or other animals can spread the virus. There are still many unknowns about COVID-19 and this is an area that remains to be studied and understood.

## Livestock

To date, there have not been any reports of livestock being infected by COVID-19 anywhere. However, livestock producers should follow normal biosecurity measures as always. This includes limiting visitors or workers who may have travelled to, or been in contact with, someone from an affected area. For more information regarding on-farm disease prevention, producers are encouraged to consult the:

- [National Biosecurity Standards and Biosecurity Principles](#)

- [National Farm-Level Biosecurity Planning Guide](#)

These recommendations will be updated as more information becomes available.

## Information for Pet/Animal Owners

### **Can COVID-19 be Transmitted from Humans to Dogs and Dogs to Humans?**

On Feb. 28, 2020, a dog in Hong Kong tested positive for COVID-19. It is suspected to be a case of human to animal transmission from infected owner to their own pet. There is currently no evidence that dogs can spread the infection. The dog did not show any clinical signs of illness and the virus was no longer detectable on the tests within five days. Since this one incident, one additional dog had a positive test for COVID-19, again with no symptoms. One cat in Belgium, living with a COVID positive human, tested positive for COVID-19 with no symptoms of disease. No cases in other domestic animals have been detected with COVID-19.

#### **If you are not ill with COVID-19,**

you can interact with your pet as you normally would, including walking, feeding and playing. You should continue to practice good hygiene during those interactions (e.g., wash hands before and after interacting with your pet; ensure your pet is kept well-groomed; regularly clean your pet's food and water bowls, bedding material, and toys).

#### **If you are ill with COVID-19,**

it is recommended that you limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. Have another member of your household take care of walking, feeding and playing with your pet. If you have a service animal or you must care for your pet, then wear a facemask. Do not share food, kiss, or hug them, and wash your hands before and after any contact with them.

### **Are Current Canine Coronavirus Vaccines Protective Against COVID-19?**

The canine coronavirus vaccine for dogs is a different strain than the current virus affecting people. No specific vaccine for this strain (COVID-19) is available yet.

### **Animals in or from Other Countries**

Although the current spread and growth of the COVID-19 outbreak is primarily associated with spread from person to person, experts agree that the virus likely originated from bats and may have passed through an intermediary animal source (currently unknown) in China before being transmitted to humans.

It is recommended that individuals who travel to an affected country or region avoid contact with animals, including wild meat and wet (live animal) markets.

If you are considering travel, check the latest travel health notices for the most up-to-date travel advice prior to travelling.

## **Animal Importation**

All animals entering Canada must meet import requirements set out by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. There are currently no specific requirements in place in Canada restricting animal importation related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Importers, rescue organizations and adoptive families should consider limiting or postponing importing animals.

As always, imported animals should be closely monitored for signs of illness and you should contact a veterinarian if they become sick. Call the veterinary practice ahead to ensure they are aware of the circumstances.

## **ABVMA OFFICE OPERATIONS**

The ABVMA office has gone remote. The decision to transition to a remote workplace was made with thoughtful consideration, and is based upon current recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and federal officials that recommend social distancing whenever possible, and recommendations that those who can work remotely should do so.

Association staff will continue to provide services, including: processing and approving membership applications; processing and approving practice applications and permit applications; administering the provincial radiation program; responding to and processing complaints from the public; and communicating with members and the public.

Staff are available via email or voice mail during regular business hours, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. MST. For a current list of staff and their contact details, please visit: <https://www.abvma.ca/site/about/staff?nav=mainsidebar>.

We are committed to supporting members and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.