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**For Immediate Release**

**Telemedicine is now helping Alberta’s veterinarians and the public maintain animal health and welfare in a time of social distancing.**

Edmonton, AB—The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association’s (ABVMA’s) implementation of telemedicine guidelines for Alberta’s veterinarians comes at a time when it’s needed most, to augment the provision of essential veterinary services. As the COVID-19 pandemic shuts businesses and keeps people isolated, the availability of telemedicine is a crucial conduit to veterinary consultation and care in a time of crisis and much needed social distancing.

[Telemedicine, as defined by the ABVMA](#) for its members and the public, is the provision of specific veterinary medical advice and veterinary treatment based on remote diagnosis of disease and injury by means of telecommunications technology where, in some specific situations, no physical examination of an animal by the veterinarian takes place. Outside times of crisis, the telemedicine policy is designed to augment the patient visit, in a way that leads to improved animal health and welfare. In the middle of the current crisis, it goes further, adding value to public health, augmenting other social distancing protocols put in place at veterinary practices across the province, [helping to flatten the curve of COVID-19 infections](#) while ensuring companion animals and livestock have access to essential veterinary services. Additionally, it provides a new tool for veterinarians who ensure food safety in commercial food production — a vital service with value that is profoundly underscored in a time of crisis.

Virtualizing this aspect of service delivery does require public vigilance, which is why the ABVMA is cautioning people about people not licensed to practice in Alberta who are soliciting telemedicine services from outside the province or country. “Although the prevalence of solicitation by these individuals is low,” says Dr. Darrell Dalton, Registrar of the ABVMA, “we do ask the public to be aware and to always contact their veterinarian first.” Dr. Dalton also noted that if you are unsure, you can check the [ABVMA’s online register](#) to see if someone is licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the province.

The scope and specific applications of telemedicine are determined by veterinary practices; therefore, the ABVMA asks the public to inquire with their veterinarian to learn more about specific options and use, and how the service fits within a clinic’s fee structure.

The ABVMA is the professional regulatory organization governing the practice of veterinary medicine in Alberta under the authority of the Veterinary Profession Act. As a self-governing profession, the ABVMA performs its regulatory and professional enhancement functions in accordance with the law and in a manner responsible to the public of Alberta. Providing leadership in animal health and welfare is a core objective of the ABVMA.

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**Media Availability:** Comments upon request from Dr. Phil Buote, Complaints Director/Deputy Registrar.