



Revised November 27, 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 continues to work 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.

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 changing their hours of operation or appointment availability as staff availability permits. Veterinary practices will 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.

Veterinary practices are experiencing an increased demand for services during the pandemic. Also, emergency veterinary hospitals have experienced an increased demand for urgent care and referral services. Concurrently, the required safety protocols to protect staff and clients have resulted in reduced efficiency managing each case. Further, hospitals are intermittently experiencing staffing shortages if staff members are required to isolate due to symptoms that could be consistent with COVID-19 while awaiting test results. The combined result of this is increased wait times for clients presenting to some veterinary practices and emergency hospitals in Alberta and across the country. Veterinary practices continue to endeavour to provide excellent client and patient care despite these challenges.

Please understand that veterinary emergency hospitals function much like the emergency room for people in that the most severely ill or injured patients will be seen first. Please understand that wait times for more stable patients to emergency hospitals at any time of day may be longer than usual, and that specialty services may not be able to be facilitated on the same day you present through emergency. This is an ever evolving situation and we thank you for your continued patience as we navigate these challenging times.

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

Animals in Canada

According to both public and animal health experts, there is currently no evidence to suggest that any animal native to Canada (wild, livestock or pets) harbours the virus that causes COVID-19.

Livestock

To date, there have not been any reports of livestock being infected by COVID-19 anywhere. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is conducting research on pigs, chickens and turkeys to determine their susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 and the potential for transmission between animals. 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](#)
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Information for Pet/Animal Owners

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

The probability that companion animals in the household of a COVID-19 case will be exposed and become infected, is thought to be low to moderate, depending on the species. At this time, there is evidence that dogs, cats, ferrets and hamsters have at least some level of susceptibility to infection with SARSCoV-2. Cats, ferrets, and hamsters have developed illness. Clinical signs are typically respiratory, although cats have also shown gastrointestinal signs.

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.

Animal Importation

All animals entering Canada must meet import requirements set out by the CFIA. 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.

Testing Animals for COVID-19

Testing of animals for SARS-CoV-2 is not recommended. Public health testing must be the priority to protect human health and prevent and slow the rate of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is driven by person to person transmission with current data suggesting that the risk for human infection through animal contact is low. Testing animals for SARS-CoV-2 may consume the personal protective equipment and supplies needed for safe sampling and testing in people. In general, test results will not change the clinical management of the animal or change the recommended measures to manage the potential risks if an animal tests positive. Specific concerns regarding testing should be discussed with the Chief Veterinary Officer for Alberta.

NEW RESTRICTIONS ANNOUNCED: NOV. 24, 2020

On Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2020, Premier Jason Kenney declared a state of public health emergency due to COVID-19 and announced new mandatory measures. Some measures took effect immediately, while some will come into effect on Friday, Nov. 27, 2020. Many mandatory measures apply to the entire province with some exceptions. These measures will be in place for at least three weeks and will be reviewed at that time. The Government of Alberta will be sending an emergency alert to all Albertans on their cell phones to advise them of these new restrictions:

A summary of the mandatory measures includes:

- No indoor gatherings in any setting
- Outdoor gatherings have a maximum capacity of 10
- Wedding and funeral services have a maximum capacity of 10, no receptions are permitted
- No festivals or events
- Grades 7-12 at home learning Nov. 30-Jan. 11
- Grades K-6 at home learning Dec. 18-Jan. 11
- Working from home should be considered where possible
- Places of worship at 1/3 normal attendance
- Restricted access to some businesses and services starting Nov. 27
- Mandatory masks for indoor workplaces (applies to Edmonton, Calgary and surrounding areas only)

For full details on these measures, and which regions are impacted, please visit: <https://www.alberta.ca/enhanced-public-health-measures.aspx>
