



College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

“Essential Service Providers” vs. “Essential Services”

- On March 26, 2020 the BC Government published a list of **essential service providers**. Included among these were businesses providing veterinary care.
- The Government defined “**essential services**” to be “those daily services essential to preserving life, health, public safety and basic societal functioning. They are the services British Columbians rely on in their daily lives.”
- The notification encouraged providers of essential services to remain open, but required those providers to follow the orders and guidance provided by the Public Health Officer (PHO) to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

– Please take a moment to reflect on the intentions of these statements –

The government designation of veterinarians as essential service providers does not equal a declaration that every service routinely provided by veterinarians is essential. It is not in the best interests of the public (from a public health view) to continue to offer and encourage routine, non-essential services so long as this crisis persists.

As the circumstances of each animal are unique, the responsibility lays with the veterinarian to identify:

- what services are *essential* for the health and welfare of that patient at this moment in time, and
- what services, while desirable under normal circumstances, may reasonably be deferred until the COVID-related risk to staff, clients and the general public is reduced.

All of this should also be done with consideration for **how to responsibly use and conserve protective gear (PPE)**, with an acute awareness of the overwhelming demand and shortages being faced by the human healthcare field right now.