

Yet to be approved draft of pre-requisite WorkSafeBC submission for veterinary practitioners.

Changes expected in delivery of veterinary medicine in BC.

On May 6th, Premier John Horgan announced the next stage of British Columbia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The document below reflects discussions between the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC), the Society of British Columbia Veterinarians (SBCV) Chapter and the Ministry of Agriculture (AGRI) on how to bring in supported changes **BUT final approval is required by WorkSafe BC and this is not in place yet, this is an unapproved draft.** The approved document will supersede all previous B.C. documents from various B.C. sources providing guidance on essential veterinary services.

As soon as we have approval of this document it will be shared with further clarification of how this impacts medical and surgical procedures. **Until we have approval do not institute any changes to increase medical or surgical procedures.**

It is hoped that we will have a 'townhall' type call to present this information once it is finalized with a platform to answer questions.

DRAFT:

Specific guidance considers the 4 basic pillars of the pandemic response that must be followed. These pillars allow veterinarians to interpret the new concepts of social and economic loosening, based on your professional judgement, and will also allow slow and careful return to performing elective surgeries and dental and diagnostic procedures in clinical practice:

1. Social and physical distancing/staying home to reduce social contact.
2. Zero tolerance for sick staff members coming in to work and provisions to support ill staff members to stay at home when they are.
3. Enhanced hygiene for people and premises.
4. Careful and conservative use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Here is the Guidance:

Each Veterinary Practice must have a detailed, **written plan for the suite of measures you will implement and maintain over the up-coming 12-18 months at your workplace(s).** This plan

must be shared with all staff and remain readily available to them. It must also be available to WorkSafeBC at any time if required.

There are **three areas** that your plan needs to address. They are focused on preventing transmission of COVID-19.

1. Support and Enforce Employee Precautionary Measures
 - a. If any Veterinarian or Veterinary staff have cold, flu, or COVID-19-like symptoms including a cough, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting or fatigue, that Veterinarian or staff member must stay at home.
 - b. No hand shaking, hugging or other personal contact between staff and clients.
 - c. Frequent hand washing with soap and water and use of hand sanitizers. Avoid touching your face. Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
 - d. Disinfect commonly touched surfaces and shared areas frequently.
 - e. Maintain physical distancing as much as operationally possible. Install engineered or physical barriers such as plexiglass shields where possible and use a non-medical or surgical mask or face covering in situations where reasonable physical distancing cannot be consistently maintained.
 - f. Use of medical (N95) masks and disposable PPE are to be limited to medical situations in which this level of personal protection is warranted
 - g. Post signage informing clients or visitors who have cold, flu, or COVID-19-like symptoms including a cough, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting or fatigue that they should not come into your practice. Verbal prompts should be used if required.
 - h. Any animal that comes from a household with known, active COVID-19 infection must be handled appropriately (considering the additional risk for staff) even if that owner does not enter your practice. This higher level of risk must be addressed in your plan.

2. Manage Physical Interactions Within the Workplace
 - a. Reduce staffing density by applying policies such as:
 - i. Smaller teams or cohorts
 - ii. Staggered work hours
 - iii. Work from home when possible
 - iv. Avoid in person meetings, use telemedicine
<https://files.constantcontact.com/03b45b1b501/fe4a7e85-d116-4722-b14a-01634f12967f.pdf>
 - v. Restrict access to the facility to as few clients as possible
 - vi. Work by appointments only for all non-emergency work
 - b. Ensure areas where staff congregates (kitchens, staff rooms, front desk, treatment areas) are actively managed to maintain physical distancing. Consider reconfiguring these spaces and/or limiting the numbers of people at any given time.
 - c. Ensure increased cleaning throughout the day.

3. Implement Safe Organizational Practices and Core-Workplace Measures for this Next Stage
 - a. Veterinary practices must have clear written policies to enable and ensure that individuals who have the symptoms of a cold, flu or COVID-19, including any coughing or sneezing do not come into the practice building, or immediately leave the practice building and go home if onset of these signs occurs at work. Staff members with COVID-19 like symptoms must self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from onset of symptoms, until their symptoms are completely resolved. Implement sick day policies for the coming 12 months that actively support individual staff being off sick or working safely at home during these illnesses. As an employer you must take leadership in this regard.
 - b. Staff members that travel internationally must remain away from the workplace for at least 14 days.
 - c. Staff members should also not come to work if they reside in the same household as a confirmed or clinical COVID-19 case who is self-isolating.
 - d. Continue to consider alterations in practice to reduce contact and improve safety, such as curbside transfer of pets, food, supplies, alternate service delivery (use of telemedicine where appropriate), minimize paper/signatures or contact where possible (verbal or electronic if possible), limited client entry and other strategies.
 - e. Continue screening clients to mitigate risks and determine appropriate use of enhanced PPE.

CVBC's authority for this guidance comes from CVBC Bylaws, Part 4 – Ethics and Standards, Division 4.2 – Code of Ethics:

Duty to the public

206(1) A registrant must protect and serve the public interest in pursuit of the highest medical and ethical standards of the profession in British Columbia.

(2) A registrant should make efforts to contribute to the education of the public in matters relating to and promoting the health and safety of animals and thereby the health and safety of the public, but must do so in accordance with generally recognized standards of integrity, competency and professionalism.