



College of Veterinary Medicine

## COVID-19:

# Recommendations for Veterinary Practices

*Prepared March 17, 2020, by Dr. Ashley Mitek from information provided by the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Jim Lowe of the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine*

### General Advice for Veterinary Practices During the COVID-19 Outbreak

- For general questions, call the state’s COVID-19 Hotline: 1-800-889-3931, email: [DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV](mailto:DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV) or visit the Illinois Department of Public Health coronavirus webpage: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>
- Make sure you have the contact information for your local health department in case you need to consult with them: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/local/alpha.htm>
- Institute appropriate cleaning and disinfection of communal surfaces.
- Encourage staff hygiene (frequent handwashing).
- Prohibit sick or febrile staff from working in your clinic. Staff members with symptoms of COVID-19 should quarantine and not be allowed to work for 14 days.
- Likewise, if a staff member has traveled to an area with widespread transmission, consult with your local health department about any restrictions on the person returning to work. (See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> )
- It is recommended that people infected with COVID-19 avoid contact with their pets, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked and sharing food. Another person in the household should feed and care for the pet. If the ill person must provide the care, the person should wash hands before and after interacting with the pet and wear a face mask.
- As a reminder, at this time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) say there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19. However, as with any disease, it’s always a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals.

(see other side)

## Advice on Delivering Veterinary Care During the COVID-19 Outbreak

- Triage or treat as many cases as possible by telemedicine (e.g., using FaceTime or Skype). *Note:* telemedicine presumes an existing veterinary-client-patient relationship, i.e., it is appropriate only for a client/patient you have previously seen in person.
- Prioritize patients that need to be urgently seen over ones that need only routine care or surgery that could be delayed.
- For cases that have to be seen (e.g., an acutely vomiting dog), nothing should move from an infected/quarantined household to a clinic without approval and clear delineation of a plan for that clinic (what, who and how you would see the case).
- If a client has a fever, cough, sore throat, or possible exposure to COVID-19, arrange for someone else to bring the sick animal to the clinic or use telemedicine for an evaluation of the animal. Contact the local health department for advice on how to safely deliver veterinary care to the animal.
- Although the risk for transmission is low, remember that pets arriving from a COVID-19–positive household have the potential to be a fomite for viral transmission.

## Additional Resources

- AVMA recommendations on Keeping Your Staff Health, Caring for Veterinary Patients, and the use of Telemedicine:  
<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>
- FAQs on Surgical Mask Shortage: <https://vetmed.illinois.edu/covid-19-surgical-masks/>