Veterinary Facilities and COVID-19

What do we know about COVID-19 and domestic animals?

▪ At this time, there is no evidence that pets play a role in spreading COVID-19 to people. However, there are reports of cats who have tested positive for the virus. Therefore, it is important to isolate ill pets from healthy people and pets when possible, just as ill people should be isolated from healthy people and pets.
▪ Person to person transmission of COVID-19 is still much more likely to occur than transmission from an animal. Additionally, soft surfaces, such as fur or hair, don’t transfer viruses as well as hard surfaces, such as doorknobs and keyboards.

How can veterinary facilities maintain social distancing with clients?

▪ Consider the workflow at your facility to create methods to maintain social distancing. Possible ideas include:
  ▪ Curbside medicine: the building is closed to clients who remain in their cars while pets are taken in and out by staff, and discussions about care are conducted over the phone
  ▪ Consider telemedicine appointments for established clients with valid veterinarian-client-patient-relationships, when medically appropriate

How should veterinary facilities handle animals during the COVID-19 outbreak?

▪ If an animal is healthy and has no exposure to people with COVID-19 symptoms, staff can use normal precautions but reduce patient contact to only what is necessary, and practice excellent hand hygiene before and after handling patients.
▪ If an animal is presenting for illness that could be consistent with COVID-19, staff should use more personal protective equipment (PPE), including facemask, eye protection, gloves and a gown or labcoat. Also, reduce patient contact to only what is necessary, and practice excellent hand hygiene before and after handling patients.
▪ See CDC’s Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics During the COVID-19 Response for more details on PPE use in specific situations and more recommendations for veterinary facilities.

How should rooms or treatment areas be cleaned and disinfected?

▪ Standard cleaning and disinfection protocols will kill the virus that causes COVID-19. Be sure to follow the correct contact time and dilution instructions for the products you use. Focus
additional disinfection on high-contact and high-touch surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, keyboards, and equipment.

What if a client has COVID-19 and their animal requires veterinary care?

▪ If client informs you they have tested positive for COVID-19, recommend that a healthy person bring in the animal for them. If that is not possible, have the client stay in their car, and send a staff member with appropriate personal protective equipment (eye and respiratory protection, gloves, and gown or labcoat) to bring the pet into the clinic.

Should animals be tested for the virus that causes COVID-19?

▪ Routine testing of animals for the virus that causes COVID-19 is not currently recommended.

▪ For pets with consistent clinical signs, veterinarians are strongly encouraged to rule out more typical respiratory pathogens first. Testing could be considered for animals with consistent clinical signs who have a history of close contact with person with COVID-19.

What if one of my employees becomes ill with COVID-19?

▪ Veterinary personnel should not work while ill, whether it is COVID-19 or another illness.

▪ MDH recommends that if people have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.), they should stay home for at least 7 days, and be fever-free for 3 days with improvement of respiratory symptoms before they return to work.

▪ At this time, contacts of people who test positive for COVID-19 are being assessed for their risk and recommendations are made to reduce potential spread. Your clinic may be contacted by MDH in this situation.

Latest Updates and Additional Resources

The COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly and this guidance may be updated as needed.


▪ Minnesota Board of Animal Health Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (www.bah.state.mn.us/covid-19/)

▪ Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine (mn.gov/boards/veterinary-medicine/)

▪ Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel (nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf), published by the
National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians includes infection control plan templates and disinfectant guidelines

- American Veterinary Medical Association: COVID-19 (www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19), with additional suggestions for modifying clinic traffic

Minnesota Department of Health
Zoonotic Diseases Unit
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us

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