

Good Afternoon Doctors,

A quick update regarding veterinarians and the Governor's shelter-in-place order that takes effect tomorrow at 12:01 a.m. Our office has received multiple calls today as to what the implications of this order are for veterinary services. Additionally, we have guidance on testing pets for coronavirus and a brief survey to track control practices that you may be implementing.

1. [Veterinarians and the Shelter in Place Order](#)
2. [COVID-19 and Pets](#)
3. [Survey of Changes Implemented in Response to COVID-19](#)

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1. **Veterinarians as an Essential Business** – The recent Governor's [order](#) implementing shelter-in-place here in Montana in response to COVID-19 included a designation of veterinary services as an essential business. This designation is in line with the Department of Homeland Security [designation](#) of veterinary and/or animal health issues as critical infrastructure. As such, you are not required to close your businesses or decline requests for veterinary care. The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians has put together the following list of essential services that should continue to be provided.

- Veterinary critical and emergency care
- Administration of initial rabies vaccination to unvaccinated domestic animals in areas with terrestrial rabies variants
- Administration of booster rabies vaccination to domestic animals with confirmed or suspected rabies exposure
- Administration of other vaccinations to domestic animals in response to local or regional outbreaks (e.g., parvovirus, distemper virus, influenza virus)
- Diagnosis and reporting of notifiable veterinary conditions (e.g., foreign animal diseases and others requiring movement restrictions)
- Physical examination and completion of Certificates of Veterinary Inspection for interstate movement of animals
- Community animal control and sheltering services

Please note, this list is not intended to limit the provision of additional services.

The attached guidance document has been provided to livestock markets across the state. While not all of the recommendations will apply to a veterinary practice, we hope that you will think about infection control practices that you may be able to implement to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

2. **COVID-19 and Pets** – You may have read reports of the two dogs in Hong Kong that have tested positive for COVID-19. Both of these dogs were positive on PCR testing of samples obtained from mucosal surfaces and both were from residences with at least one human confirmed positive for COVID-19. This morning, there are two new reports. First, one of the Hong Kong dogs has tested positive on serological tests. Second, a [report](#) out of Belgium of a coronavirus infection in a cat, including clinical signs of disease. The animal also resided in a home with a human case.

Because of these reports, you may receive requests to test pets for COVID-19. Testing must be approved through our office or through the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). In order for testing to be approved, animals must reside in a house with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and must be exhibiting clinical signs of illness. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tahnee Szymanski (406-465-4051 or [tszymanski@mt.gov](mailto:tszymanski@mt.gov)) or Dr. Kerry Pride with DPHHS at ([kpride@mt.gov](mailto:kpride@mt.gov)).

At this time the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory is not able to conduct animal testing for COVID-19. Should an appropriate candidate for testing be identified, a state or federal FADD would collect samples for submission to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory. USDA guidance on the testing of companion animals can be found [here](#).

Please note, there is still no evidence that animals are capable of transmitting the virus to humans or to other pets.

3. **Survey of Changes Implemented in Response to COVID-19** – Please follow this [link](#) to a short survey! We are hoping to gather information about the veterinary community's response to COVID-19. We will share results early next week, with the hope that you may be able to adopt ideas and practices that other clinics are implementing.

Best wishes,  
Szymanski, DVM & Zaluski, DVM