



COVID-19 Considerations and Directives to Veterinary Practices and Policymakers

Thank you to those that responded to the email on COVID-19 that Lainie Franklin recently sent out concerning the questions you are receiving on the Coronavirus pandemic and what your Board is offering as guidance to your licensees. The AAVSB is committed to working with federal, state, provincial, and industry partners on initiatives that can balance workforce and delivery needs with safe and effective patient care. We commend the tireless work of the AAVSB's Member Board members and staff and the dedication of veterinarians and veterinary technicians to go above and beyond to care for patients.

The pace of events, concerns, and governmental action quickened dramatically over the past weekend. It is appropriate and urgent for the AAVSB's Member Boards to provide guidance to, and share concerns with practicing veterinarians and veterinary technicians, as well as educate state, provincial, and local policymakers. With this in mind, your AAVSB leadership encourages each Member Board to reach out to lawmakers and licensees as it deems appropriate, and here are comments for your consideration:

- Proper and necessary medical care for companion animals, large animals, food animals, zoo animals and laboratory animals, is a public health priority and essential to the well-being of the animal and the public. For these reasons, veterinary clinics or practices must be included within the definition of "essential services or businesses" as local, state, provincial, and federal governments implement rules distinguishing between "essential" and "non-essential" entities.
- During this time, telemedicine and, in particular, telerriage has emerged as an important way to support and monitor the health of veterinary patients, and also protect the health of veterinary teams. Using telemedicine can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 between people and can help conserve personnel resources because it allows veterinary patients to be appropriately triaged with only those veterinary patients that the

veterinarian determines should be seen making the trip to the clinic with their owners. We encourage each Member Board to use the [AAVSB Telehealth Guidelines](#) when reviewing existing regulations. Veterinarians and veterinary technicians are looking to your board for reassurance that telemedicine and teletriage are appropriate and can be used in these extraordinary circumstances whether within an existing VCPR, used for remote supervision, or to address emergency situations.

- It is important to remind your licensees that prescribing medications must meet jurisdictional and federal requirements.
- Licensed veterinarians and veterinary technicians in each state understandably are concerned about satisfying continuing education (CE) requirements each year to maintain their licenses. To the extent in-person CE meeting requirements cannot be met due to travel or meeting restrictions, or health concerns of the CE providers and/or practitioners, then Member Boards should consider waiving in-person requirements and allow alternative means of course delivery to be accepted.
- Your board may require personal protective equipment (PPE) be available at veterinary clinics or practices for the protection of staff and patients. Supply chain restrictions on PPE must take veterinary care into account. Options are available for conserving PPE and should be considered by veterinary practices. To the extent PPE supplies should be inadequate to supply the needs of veterinary practices, Member Boards should consider such shortages when called upon to review the standard by which such care has been provided during the time of such shortage. Member Boards are encouraged to allow greater deference to the veterinarian's professional judgment for unique circumstances that arise during these times of quarantine and resource conservation.
- Using their professional judgement, veterinarians may wish to discuss with their clients whether it may be appropriate to postpone some elective procedures, while we manage our way through the COVID-19 crisis. This can assist in conserving much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE). Because the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged so that timely and accurate information can guide what services are appropriate to deliver.

I welcome your feedback and additional comments regarding addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in the veterinary regulation community. Please reach out to me at JPenrod@aavsb.org.

Additional COVID-19 resources are available to Member Boards on the AVMA website: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>.

Thank you,

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