

- Can my pet get COVID-19?

There are now several cases and experimental studies indicating that some companion animals can be infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Ferrets appear to be most susceptible (they can get sick, and transmit it between animals). Cats and dogs can also become infected, and cats may (rarely) have symptoms, but no dogs have been reported to develop symptoms. Our knowledge base regarding COVID-19 in pets is rapidly evolving. However, at this time there is no evidence that pets pose a significant transmission risk to people. Out of an abundance of caution the CDC recommends that sick individuals limit their contact with pets the way they would with other people.

- How should I assure my animal is prepared for an emergency situation?

The BC SPCA encourages all pet guardians to include their animals in any emergency planning, including having pets up to date on health care, microchipped and registered in the BC Pet Registry, and keeping at least two weeks of pet food, supplies and medications on hand.

- Can I still walk my dog and bring them to dog parks during this pandemic?

Yes, but please practice social distancing and stay 2 metres away from other people. If you are actively sick with flu-like symptoms, someone else should care for your dog and you should not leave your house. Some parks may be closed; please follow all local orders around access to parks and other areas.

- What do I do if my pet is sick?

If your pet is sick, please contact your veterinarian. If you have COVID-19 and believe your pet may be sick from this, notify your vet at the time of appointment booking as they will need to contact public health authorities and take precautions when handling your animal.

- What if my animal gets sick and my animal hospital isn't open?

Please call your vet office and listen to outgoing messages, which should describe how to access emergency veterinary services.

- Can I get COVID-19 from petting or caring for a pet of someone who has it?

According to current public health agency guidelines based on a review of published studies, there is no risk of transmission from viral contamination of animal hair. However, there is evidence that companion animals may be able to become infected with the virus (meaning they might shed the virus for up to 14 days). Anyone caring for an animal from an affected home should keep this animal away from other animals for 14 days, and follow basic hygiene precautions such as routine cleaning of surfaces, immediate proper disposal of animal feces, limiting facial contact with the animal and touching of the face, and frequent handwashing including after caring for the animal. We recommend that people contact their physician with any

questions about their own health and risk for COVID-19, and their veterinarian with questions about the health of the animal.

- What happens when we run out of hand sanitizer in a branch?

Please continue to prioritize hand washing over the use of sanitizer. If you are out of sanitizer than hand washing practices must be followed. Here is a link to the hand washing sign from our HR department.

- What should field officers do if we run out of hand sanitizer and cannot get disinfecting wipes?

Accelerated hydrogen peroxide (AHP) is available at the branches, hospitals and clinics and can be diluted 1:120 and used as hand sanitizer. It does not need to be rinsed. It is safe, but will be drying. Hand lotion can be applied once the product has dried (but should not be mixed into the diluted product). The 1:120 dilution kills the novel coronavirus and is used by the shelters to disinfect “human areas.” Field officers can ask branches for 1:120 AHP in a small bottle or spray bottle. Animal areas are cleaned with 1:40 (three times more concentrated). As we are trying to conserve AHP, this should be considered as a “last resort” option if other hand hygiene supplies are not available. Also, please note that Lysol wipes and some other human cleaning products are not safe for use around cats and should only be used on human-related supplies that won’t come into contact with cats or other animals.

- What happens when we run out of AHP?

At present we still have a supply of AHP, but we may run out. We ask that all facilities follow the AHP Conservation steps outlined in the Operational Plan to stretch our supply as long as possible. If this occurs, we will switch to another disinfectant if it can be sourced (either Virkon or Klorman or something with similar active ingredients. If no disinfectant effective against the most common shelter pathogens can be sourced, facilities may have to close (alternate service delivery model with no animals in branch).

- We’re running low on PPE, what are we to use in its place?

We are working on replacing some PPE use with washable items such as lab coats, coveralls and scrubs. Please continue to solicit donations of these items. Branch managers should keep our shared PPE Inventory spreadsheet up to date with your current stock. Please work to conserve the PPE stock that you have by ensuring you are prepared for each visit into an isolated area and don’t have to run in and out.

- Volunteers have contacted us to ask whether they can sew reusable masks for us. What should I tell them?

Washable masks are great, and we can use them in some locations. What would be most helpful is if they could sew “isolation gowns” for us that can replace the yellow disposable gowns long term. We have a new Resource List: Resources for sewing washable PPE in the Ops COVID-19

area on the staff portal. Please send them this information/ patterns and ask them for feedback on the materials. Please also let the AH team know if you have feedback once you are using the finished product.

- What if one of our fosters is high-risk and has been advised by their physician to stay home to prevent exposure, but has an animal due for vet treatments?

As all animals will have already received some vet treatments at intake, it is acceptable to delay vet treatments that are due for up to 2 weeks. If the delay is anticipated to be longer than two weeks, please ask the foster to have someone else bring in the animal, or advise that if they have a car they can come in by appointment, a staff member will come out to the car and retrieve the animal, vet treatments will be administered, and then the animal can be returned to the car.

- What if one of our fosters has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 and needs to bring in an animal for vet treatments?

As all animals will have already received some vet treatments at intake, it is acceptable to delay vet treatments that are due for up to 2 weeks. Most individuals will be recovered by that time. If the delay is anticipated to be longer than two weeks, please ask the foster to have someone else bring in the animal, or advise that if they have a car they can come in by appointment, a staff member wearing PPE will come out to the car and retrieve the animal, vet treatments will be administered, and then the animal can be returned to the car. Surfaces should then be disinfected.

- What happens when my vet cannot do s/n surgeries? What should we do?

We anticipate that the availability of s/n surgeries will be markedly reduced or eliminated in the coming weeks. If no vets in your community will s/n shelter animals, animals otherwise ready for adoption should be adopted out with postadoption spay/neuter certificates. Otherwise, animals should be placed in foster to adopt as usual pending an appointment (as long as it can happen in the next few weeks). Under “normal” circumstances, we discourage the use of postadoption s/n certificates, but this is an unprecedented situation and we do not want these animals accumulating in our system. Branches should track animals receiving s/n certificates in order to follow up with these adopters when appointments are available again.

- When issuing a post-adoption s/n certificate, do I specify which hospital to use? Is there a dollar or time limit attached to the certificate?

No, we cannot direct adopters to a specific hospital. The time limit is 2 months after s/n services resume in the community, as determined by your branch. The dollar amount entered on the blank line designated for “Certificate Amount” should be determined by each branch based on the “typical” amount that is charged to the branch for an animal of that species, age and sex. This amount should be no greater than what is supported by your existing spay/neuter budget. If you have further questions about how to determine this amount, please contact your RM.

- Should we still issue a free post-adoption veterinary examination certificate? What if our community vets are not offering wellness/ elective services?

Yes, a certificate should still be issued. The wording on the certificate states “participating veterinarians” so each vet has a choice whether or not to honour these at any specific time, or in general. Veterinarians also have the discretion to extend the duration of time that these will be honoured beyond 7 days. If veterinary services are already severely diminished in your community, it makes sense to verbally inform adopters that due to the effects of COVID-19 on veterinary services, they may not be able to use the certificate.

- Will there be any formal communication with BC veterinarians from the BC SPCA?

A letter from Emilia and Karen outlining our basic response plans and thanking veterinarians for their ongoing contributions was distributed by branches to the vets we work with on March 25.

- Can the public bring donations to the shelter?

Yes, but branches are encouraged to have them call ahead (if staffing allows) to make a plan for drop off. Items should be left outside to be retrieved by a staff member. If anyone in the household is actively sick with flu-like symptoms, people should refrain from bringing donations. Branches can consider placing a donation bin with signage outside their front door or gate.

- What if someone wants to donate something that we know is needed by the human health care system? Example: N95 masks, disposable gowns or suits, face shields or eye protection, exam gloves

If someone contacts you to donate these types of items, please direct them to donate these to human health care workers at this time. If they are unwilling to do so, or unable to find a local way to do so, these items may be accepted. If you are unable to use them, please reach out to the Animal Health team to see how these may fit into our biosecurity protocols or be used by another department. You may also be asked to donate these items to human health care workers at a future date as need in your area increases. More information on where these items can be donated: <https://www.safecarebc.ca/operationprotect/>

- I am worried I have COVID-19 or have been exposed, or a close contact has COVID-19, or I am worried about coming to work due to my health status or have questions about my employment. What should I do?

Please contact your supervisor and HR for all human health and human risk related inquiries.

- For incoming animals from affected households, can pets from different households be housed in the same isolation area?

Yes, PPE should be used (Level 2 or Level 3 depending on species and housing setup) and these animals separated from the general population for 14 days. A single room or area can be used for animals in separate kennels; the animals will not contaminate each other if they are housed separately and PPE is used. The 14-day period applies to each individual animal based on when they left the human home, and does not “reset” if new animals are added to the area.

- When do we expect things to return to normal?

At this time, we do not know how long these changes will need to stay in effect, but we will continue to update them as directions from public officials change. Expect precautions to be in place for weeks to months.

- Do all of our regular operational protocols still apply?

Yes, all current protocols on day to day work, including all of our animal management systems, still apply with the additions outlined in your facility level assignment. Please continue to report things to Animal health and other departments as usual. Animal care should remain the same.

- Do I have to use the original signs from HR and Ops along with the Restricted Access Sign?

Yes, you need to use the original signs and follow all precautions in the Operational Plan that pertain to your assigned risk level. This is because members of the public are still entering the facility.