

**Animal Health Alert: Updated COVID-19 Guidance for Veterinary Practice Staff**  
**10.28.2020**

Dear Colleagues,

First, we want to thank you for your continued efforts to keep pets and humans healthy through the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the everyday logistics of veterinary practice have changed drastically and quickly. Your response to these challenges has been admirable and your service is truly essential.

As you may be aware, in April, Los Angeles County Veterinary Public Health posted guidance to help you protect your clients and employees during the pandemic. We have recently updated the [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Guidance for Veterinary Practice Staff](#) to reflect changes to recommendations based on new research and findings about COVID-19. We have had several COVID-19 outbreaks among staff at veterinary hospitals in Los Angeles County and hope that this guidance can help limit any further illnesses, keeping staff healthy and practices open.

There are several important changes and recommendations to be aware of:

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) recommendations now state that a medical-grade facemask such as a surgical or procedure face mask with face shield should be used if social distancing is not feasible while working (e.g. while restraining an animal or during a procedure).
- Surgical or procedure facemasks are recommended while practice staff are in the facility (even if able to social distance).
- Risk of transmission is highest in indoor settings especially those that are crowded or that have poor ventilation. Facilities should prevent crowding in breakrooms, reception areas, and work rooms and ensure adequate ventilation.
- Businesses including veterinary practices are required to report to the Department of Public Health when there are three or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 among employees within a span of 14 days with evidence of epidemiological linkage such as sharing a physical space. Report cases to Public Health at (888) 397-3993 or (213) 240-7821. A case manager will be assigned from Public Health to guide the facility response and provide technical support, infection control guidance and site-specific control measures to protect all staff and close contacts.

Please note that the definition for a close contact has changed since the new guidance has been posted. A close contact is now defined as an individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period (the time is now cumulative throughout the day as opposed to 15 minutes at one time) OR an individual who had unprotected contact with the infected person's body fluids and/or secretions, for example, being coughed or sneezed on, sharing utensils or saliva, or providing care without wearing appropriate protective equipment.

Guidance documents from Los Angeles County Public Health:

- [Los Angeles County COVID-19 Guidance for Veterinary Practice Staff \(pdf attached\)](#)
- [Los Angeles County COVID-19 FAQ for Animal Care and Control Staff \(pdf attached\)](#)
- [Los Angeles County COVID-19 FAQ for Pet Owners \(pdf attached\)](#)

Links for additional local and state COVID-19 updates:

- [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health COVID-19 site](#)
- [Los Angeles County COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Los Angeles City COVID-19 site](#)
- [California Department of Public Health COVID-19 site](#)

Additional resources for veterinarians and clients:

- [American Veterinary Medical Association COVID-19 site](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 and Animals](#)
- [California Veterinary Medical Association COVID-19 Updates](#)

Information on SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Animals:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Animals](#)

Additional resources for animal control and shelters:

- [Interim Recommendations for Shelters from AVMA](#)
- [Animal Services Role in COVID-19 Support, University of Wisconsin-Madison](#)
- [National Animal Care and Control Association Statements on COVID-19](#)

This situation is constantly changing, and we encourage you to check for updates regularly. Please call (213-288-7060) or email ([vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov)) if you have specific questions.

Sincerely,

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