

## WSVMA COVID-19 Digest – April 7, 2020

### Tiger tests positive for SARS-CoV-2

The USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed the presence of SARS-CoV-2 in one tiger at a zoo in New York. This tiger is the first animal to test positive for COVID-19 in the US. Several lions and tigers at the zoo showed clinical signs of respiratory illness and this tiger was tested accordingly. Public health employees believe the large cat became ill after being exposed to a zoo employee who was actively shedding virus. All of the large cats are expected to recover. No other animals in other areas of the zoo are exhibiting similar clinical signs. USDA and CDC are monitoring this situation and the OIE will be notified of the finding.

At this time there is no evidence to suggest that any animals including pets or livestock can spread COVID-19 to people.

### AVMA makes the following recommendations for animal owners:

Animal owners without symptoms of COVID-19 should continue to practice good hygiene during interactions with animals. This includes washing hands before and after such interactions or handling animal food, waste, or supplies.

Out of an abundance of caution, and until more is known about the virus, those ill with COVID-19 should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people. Have another member of the household or business take care of feeding and otherwise caring for any animals, including pets. If you have a service animal or you must care for your animals, including pets, then wear a facemask; don't share food, kiss, or hug them, and wash your hands before and after any contact with them.

There have been no reports of pets or livestock becoming ill with COVID-19 in the United States. At this point in time, there is also no evidence that domestic animals, including pets and livestock, can spread COVID-19 to people.

Source: [AVMA](#)

### Recommendations for veterinary practices

- All veterinary practices must follow Washington's [Proclamation by the Governor 20-25](#) and provide limited veterinary services only, taking all measures to limit risk of COVID-19 exposure to staff, clients, and the community at large.
- When scheduling an appointment with a client, the veterinary staff member should ask the client if the pet has been exposed to a known or suspected COVID-19 case. Telemedicine may be an option, in some cases.
- If essential veterinary care is needed, a healthy friend or family member should bring the animal in, and staff should again ask if the pet has been exposed to a known or suspected COVID-19 case upon intake. Refer to the AVMA's flowchart "[Minimizing COVID-19 Exposure and Social Distancing in Veterinary Practice](#)" to help you and your practice decide how a patient can be best cared for while also staying as safe as possible.

- Staff who handle the animal should continue to be diligent with standard infection control practices including good hand hygiene, avoiding mucous membrane exposure to pet saliva and other bodily fluids. At minimum, gloves and outerwear are recommended when working with the animal and cleaning the animal's environment. Gloves, gown and goggles / face shield with surgical mask, as well as minimizing the number of staff present are recommended if there is a risk for sprays or splashes. See National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) [Veterinary Standard Precautions](#) and [CDC Optimizing PPE](#).
- The pet should be kept isolated from other pets while at the practice.
- Continue to clean and disinfect all equipment used at your facility, following package instructions including recommended contact time. Read more about [cleaning and disinfection for community facilities](#) and [control and prevention](#).

*Source: Florida Department of Health*

### **WSVMA Brochure – Your Pet & COVID-19: What You Need to Know**

The WSVMA introduces a new brochure for pet owners that includes information on what coronaviruses are, how it's spread and how to protect pets. It also includes frequently asked questions about can pets contract COVID-19 and if people can contract it from their pets. Download the brochure [here](#).

### **Veterinary Board of Governors discussing veterinary practice during the COVID-19 crisis**

The Veterinary Board of Governors (VBOG) has held two meetings to discuss guidance for veterinarians during the COVID-19 crisis. New guidance is not yet finalized but it's expected that they'll soon issue policy statements that address establishing the VCPR via the use of telemedicine, continuing education credits, supervision and tasks for veterinary technicians and staff, and dispensing prescriptions.

VBOG is meeting weekly to determine best practices for veterinarians while facing the realities of operating under stay at home orders and only providing essential services. As soon as their guidance is issued, we'll bring it you.

To stay abreast of regulations that affect veterinary practice now and in the future, subscribe to the [GovDelivery service](#) and choose VBOG through subscriber preferences.

### **Use of Face Masks**

[CDC recommends the use of cloth face coverings](#) in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. The purpose of the use of face coverings is to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have SARS-CoV-2 and do not know it from transmitting it to others. The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those should continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. A [publication in the Lancet](#)

suggests that it would be reasonable that vulnerable individuals avoid crowded areas and use surgical facemasks rationally when exposed to high-risk areas. Facemasks should be used by people with symptoms of COVID-19 to avoid spreading the disease to others and facemasks are also important for healthcare workers and people who are taking care of someone at home or in a healthcare facility.

*Source: AVMA*