

# **COVID-19 REGULATORY INFORMATION FOR VETERINARIANS**

**UPDATED MARCH 20, 2020**

In response to the declaration of peacetime state of emergency, the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine issues the following advisories:

**1. Executive Order 20-09 issued by Governor Walz on March 19, 2020 requires health professionals to delay elective surgeries and procedures during the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency.**

[State of Minnesota Executive Order 20-09](#)

This Order recognizes that conservation of critical resources such as ventilators and personal protective equipment (PPE) are critical resources that must be preserved.

The Board expects veterinarians to use professional judgement and expertise in determining the urgency of case interventions in conformance with paragraph 2 of Executive Order 20-09. The Board strongly recommends that reusable PPE be used for all urgent and emergency surgery and other procedures whenever possible. Examples of reusable PPE include cloth surgical gowns, caps and masks that can be sterilized.

**2. Extension of the time frame for a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 156.16, Subd. 12 (b).**

During the peacetime emergency, the Board will construe the “timely visits” requirement for a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship with a patient or herd to be met if the veterinarian has examined the patient or visited the premises where the animal is kept within the past 18 months. This advisory will remain in effect until January 1, 2021.

**3. Extension of time for accrual of continuing education credits for license renewal.**

Veterinarians whose license expires on February 28, 2021, who have not completed sufficient continuing education for license renewal, will be granted an extension until February 28, 2023, upon written request to the Board.

To date, no evidence suggests that companion animals can become infected and ill with COVID-19. Current information regarding potential zoonotic transmission to share with clients and staff is posted on the [Minnesota Board of Animal Health's COVID-19 information web page](#).

Veterinarians are strongly recommended to follow and stay abreast of current recommendations for limiting spread of the virus between people on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website and the Minnesota Department of Health’s website.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Information web page](#)

[Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 information web page](#)

Providing professional veterinary services to animals via telemedicine within a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) can be medically appropriate and a means to maintain social distancing. A valid VCPR temporarily now requires that a veterinarian within the practice has seen the patient in the last 18 months or made timely visits to the premises where the animal is housed within the last 18 months. Medical record keeping for telemedicine interactions should include as many of the same parameters as a patient visit, including history, clinical signs as reported by the client, tentative diagnosis, treatment plan, medication and treatment, including amount and frequency. Within this framework, veterinarians can dispense and prescribe medications.

If a veterinarian does not have a valid VCPR with a client and their animal, advice provided via electronic means should not include patient-specific recommendations. Record keeping for those interactions as well is strongly encouraged.

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Under Minnesota Board of Pharmacy law, veterinarians are classified as prescribers, practitioners. Upon request by a Minnesota-licensed veterinarian whose practice may be closed, a veterinarian may dispense medication for a patient of the closed practice so long as the veterinarian making the request has a valid veterinarian-client patient relationship with that patient. The dispensing veterinarian must maintain a record of the prescription order that was dispensed.

Shortages of supplies such as disinfectants, sterile gowns, surgical masks and personal protective clothing are creating additional challenges. Professional judgement should determine what can be reasonably substituted, when a patient cannot be safely accommodated, or sterility cannot be maintained.

Pharmacies and pharmacists are greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minnesota Board of Pharmacy has compiled a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ's), many of which touch on the issues facing veterinarians. The FAQ's and corresponding answers are posted on the Board of Pharmacy's website home page under **Notices & Updates**. This document will be updated as new information becomes available.

[Minnesota Board of Pharmacy home page](#)