Coronavirus: An information update from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario
March 10, 2020

The College of Veterinarians of Ontario recognizes veterinarians are concerned about the potential implications of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on practice. Although the Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for Canada at this time, the College is attentive to growing concerns and questions that veterinarians may have.

This information update endeavours to share information to keep in mind in the current situation and also to provide helpful links to assist you in staying abreast of news concerning COVID-19.

Reminders:

Infection control and biosecurity protocols: It is always important to take steps to protect your patients, clients and staff from the spread of infectious disease within a veterinary clinic, hospital, mobile facility or on farm. Many of the routine infection control practices used to control the spread of other pathogens in veterinary clinics, such as hand hygiene and cleaning and disinfection of high-contact surfaces, are also effective against the COVID-19 virus. Be attentive to your infection control protocols.

Telemedicine: When appropriate, take advantage of information technology to deliver veterinary services from a distance. People or pets that have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 through travel abroad or contact with others should remain isolated at home for 14 days unless they require urgent medical attention. For further information, review the Professional Practice Standard on Telemedicine. If an animal in this situation needs to be seen, contact the Ontario Veterinary College for advice.

Resources & Supplies: Resources and supplies, such as masks, gowns and gloves, are in high demand and may become scarce. With this in mind, exercise prudent use of such items and keep informed of best approaches to help conserve supplies in unusual circumstances while continuing to protect the health of patients.

Looking Ahead:
The College will continue to monitor the progress of COVID-19 and its potential impact on the delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario. In particular, the College is attentive to the potential need for flexibility in meeting professional standards. Although nothing has been altered at this point, the College is prepared should it become necessary to make changes that support the delivery of safe veterinary care in Ontario while also protecting public health.

Helpful Reference Materials:

Ministry of Health
Infection prevention and control best practices for small animal veterinary clinics (general)
https://oahn.ca/resources/ipc-best-practices/

OVMA (COVID-19 FAQ)
https://www.ovma.org/veterinarians/coronavirus-faq/

Worms & Germs Blog (COVID-19 posts)
https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/tags/covid-19/

Public Health Agency of Canada

World Health Organization
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

OIE World Organization for Animal Health