



May 6, 2020

The Honourable Sylvia Jones  
Solicitor General  
25 Grosvenor Street, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

Dear Minister Jones,

On behalf of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA), I would like to thank the Ministry for its on-going work in emergency management planning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario. OVMA is proud to have partnered with the Government of Ontario to protect human health while still maintaining animal health and welfare.

The veterinary community has worked tirelessly to adapt to the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 and understands that it will not be “business as usual” as the economy re-opens. However, given the extension to the state of emergency in Ontario, it has become evident that it is not in the best interest of veterinary patients and clients for surgeries, treatments and vaccinations to be postponed indefinitely. OVMA therefore respectfully requests that the Province remove the “urgent care only” limitation on veterinary services, and revert to the original language used in the first essential workplace list announcement on March 23, 2020.

Limiting veterinary services to “urgent care only” was possible for a short period, and veterinarians have worked hard to ensure that visits to veterinary practices have been limited to truly urgent cases. Veterinarians are using their professional judgement to determine when services or procedures are appropriate for specific patients based on their individual circumstances, and many procedures have been postponed and medical conditions temporarily managed with analgesics if the situation is not urgent. However, this approach cannot be maintained indefinitely without potentially serious consequences for both animals and their owners. At some point, medical conditions need to be treated before they endanger the long-term health of the animal, or become so expensive to treat that the only viable option is euthanasia. It is also important for veterinarians to reintroduce preventative medicine practices such as vaccination to their practice, to ensure that animal herd health is not compromised. As the temperature rises and the Province looks to reopen parks, having unvaccinated companion animals co-mingling in dog parks could facilitate the spread of communicable disease. Removing the “urgent care only” restriction would provide veterinarians with the flexibility to begin offering preventative services and avoid exacerbating seasonal concerns for animal health.

Following the Province’s best practices for reopening businesses, OVMA has been working collaboratively with Dr. Scott Weese, an infection disease expert at the Ontario Veterinary College, to

provide guidance and support to the veterinary profession. Please find attached the *COVID-19: A Guide to Reopening Veterinary Medicine in Ontario*. The guide was designed to be a risk-based approach for veterinary practices to combat the spread of COVID-19 while allowing veterinarians to practice preventative medicine as the economy reopens. Our hope is that the recommendations will give the Ministry greater confidence in removing the “urgent care only” provision, knowing that risk mitigation strategies will be in place until the crisis has passed and the economy is fully reopened.

I appreciate your consideration of the above request. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, you can contact OVMA’s Manager of Government and External Relations, Brandi Deimling at 1-800-670-1702 ext. 224.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug  
OVMA, CEO

cc: Joshua Johnson, Senior Policy Advisor, Community Safety  
Dr. Albert Wimmers, President, OVMA