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Provincial shutdown FAQs

As reported in [yesterday's NewsHound](#), veterinary practices are considered essential workplaces and may remain open during the provincial shutdown, which begins Dec. 26. During the shutdown, veterinary practices may only provide services that:

- are necessary for the immediate health and welfare of the animal, **or**
- are provided through curbside pick-up and drop-off of the animal.

OVMA has received a variety of inquiries from members regarding the shutdown. Here are answers to some common questions we've received.

Q. I saw on the news that practices can only provide urgent care during the shutdown period. Is that true?

A. No. Veterinary practices will still be able to offer a range of medical services, including annual physical examinations, vaccinations, spays and neuters, etc. Services that do not address the immediate health and welfare of the animal can only be offered using curbside drop-off and pickup of the animal.

Q. Can clients come into the practice?

A. Yes, but only if a veterinarian, in their professional judgment, deems the visit to be necessary for the immediate health and welfare of the animal. Examples may include euthanasia or examining/treating a sick or injured animal. These are the situations when practices may consider allowing a client to enter the facility with the animal, however, the practice may also provide these services through curbside drop-off and pick-up of the animal. Practices are to limit the number of clients in the clinic and make sure to follow all public health measures, including physical distancing, screening, personal protective equipment, face coverings and safety plans.

Remember that other types of appointments, such as general wellness examinations, can still take place. However, such appointments must be done using curbside pick-up and drop-off of the animal.

Q. Can clients enter the practice for euthanasias?

A. Yes. Practices are encouraged to keep the number of clients at a minimum, and make sure to follow all public health measures, including physical distancing, screening, personal protective equipment, face coverings, and safety plans.

Q. Can the practice still do grooming?

A. No, unless grooming is deemed necessary for medical reasons (e.g. an animal needs to be shaved as a result of severe matting, ingrown toenails need to be trimmed, etc.). If grooming is required, it must be done by veterinary practice staff, not a groomer operating a separate business, even if the groomer operates out of the same building as the practice.

(This is new information received by OVMA from the government this morning.)

Q. What about having clients coming into the practice to pay for services?

A. If possible, payment for services provided by curbside drop-off and pick-up should be taken without having the client enter the practice. This can be done via a wireless terminal, taking information over the phone, etc.

Q. What about house calls?

A. If the house call is necessary for the immediate health and welfare of the animal (e.g. you are assessing or treating a sick or injured animal or performing a euthanasia), you may enter the client's home. Other types of appointments (e.g. annual physicals) should be done outside the home or postponed until after the shutdown.

Q. What about veterinarians that are monitoring large food-producing animals.

A. Herd health and on-site farm visits can take place for food-producing animals. Masks and personal protective equipment should be worn and social distancing maintained from farm staff. For more information and guidelines, see the [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs website](#).

For more information and resources, visit [OVMA's Coronavirus FAQ page](#). If you still have questions, email OVMA at info@ovma.org.

A staff member may have been exposed to COVID-19 now what?**Scenario A – An employee falls ill.**

If the employee becomes ill:

- The ill staff member should remain at home or immediately go home if the symptoms surface while at work. If the employee was at work, the clinic/office does not need to close, but remaining staff should sanitize all workspaces.
- The ill staff member is to contact telehealth Ontario or an Assessment Centre to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.
- If it's determined that the individual does not need to be tested for COVID-19, they are to remain at home until they are well and symptom-free for at least 24 hours.
- If the individual tested for COVID-19 receives a positive result, Public Health will notify the employer and provide next steps. A positive test does not automatically mean everyone in the clinic needs to self-isolate or is at risk, it will depend on the health practices and social distancing being done at the clinic. Public Health will evaluate and provide directives.
- Ensure a thorough cleaning of the ill employee's work area and any other areas in the clinic where the staff member may have worked during their last shift.

Scenario B – An employee's spouse/partner or family member who they live with falls ill.

- The staff member should remain at home.
- The staff member should seek direction from telehealth Ontario or an Assessment Centre.
- If COVID-19 testing is required, the staff member should self-isolate until results are received and further direction is provided by Public Health.
- If COVID-19 testing is not required and the employer wants the staff member to remain at home, they may ask the individual to do so, but the employer will be required to pay the individual's salary.

Scenario C – An employee was somewhere (e.g. a grocery store) where a store employee was later tested positive for COVID-19.

- Having been in a facility where someone subsequently tests positive for COVID-19 does not automatically mean everyone who has been in close proximity to the ill

- person needs to self-isolate or is at risk.
- Individuals who have been potentially exposed to COVID-19 should contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, as each situation will be unique and contact tracing may be required.
 - Employers can ask exposed staff to remain at home, while being paid, and contact Public Health for further direction.

Scenario D – A client who recently visited the clinic tested positive for COVID-19.

- Having a client visit the clinic who later tests positive for COVID-19 does not automatically mean everyone who has been in close proximity to the ill person needs to self-isolate or is at risk.
- A contact tracer will be assigned to individuals who test positive for the virus and evaluate exposure risk to all individuals/businesses who may have been in contact with the case-positive individual. Public Health will provide further direction based on the risk assessment with regards to quarantining and COVID-19 testing.
- If staff have been following proper protocols (e.g. wearing masks, sanitizing work stations, keeping six feet between them when possible, etc.), the risk of exposure would be low.
- Employers who are concerned about potential exposure to COVID-19 should contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, as each situation will be unique and contact tracing may be required.

In all scenarios, employers can contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, if required. Visit the government's website to [find your local Public Health Unit](#). Individuals can take the [Ministry of Health's online Self-Assessment](#).



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