



## COVID-19 update

Over the past few weeks, Ontario has witnessed daily record-breaking cases of COVID-19. Today, the provincial government announced further measures to combat the spread of the virus in provincial hot spots. As of Monday, Nov. 23, Toronto and Peel Region will move into the “grey zone” (lockdown). New restrictions have also been placed on several regions in the province. These changes do not affect veterinary services. In addition, the province hasn't given any indication that it's considering re-implementing any restrictions on veterinary practice operations in the future.

Practices in all regions, especially those in the grey zone, are encouraged to follow Public Health guidance and continue enforcing curbside measures and using telemedicine, when possible. As per the provincial government, face coverings (non-medical mask, such as a cloth mask) must be used in public indoor spaces and wherever physical distancing is a challenge, including workplaces, even those that are not open to the public. Aside from masking, social distancing and hand hygiene are imperative in reducing the spread of the virus.

### Resources for veterinary practices

- [OVMA's Reopening Guide](#)
- [OVMA's Coronavirus FAQ page](#)
- [Dr. Scott Weese's Worms and Germs blog](#)
- [Ontario face coverings and masks information](#)
- [Ontario's COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool](#)
- [Ontario COVID-19 testing information and locations](#)

## Referring pets to emergency hospitals

During these unprecedented times, emergency hospitals have experienced an increased demand for urgent care and referral services. Emergency practices have faced the challenge of working effectively to provide essential care, while implementing required safety protocols to protect staff and clients.

Despite their best efforts, like many regular veterinary practices, emergency hospitals in Ontario and across the country are experiencing increased wait times and intermittent staffing shortages while delivering curbside service. Recently, the demand has often been so acute that emergency hospitals have had to turn away patients in need of emergency care.

Emergency practices continue to endeavour to provide excellent client and patient care despite these challenges, but seek the assistance of the primary care community in helping to manage client expectations. Primary care practices can assist by:

- Doing their best to accommodate emergency appointment requests, whenever possible. This can be facilitated by leaving room in the daily schedule for emergencies or by rescheduling preventive health-care appointments to accommodate emergency appointments, when necessary.
- When an emergency appointment cannot be accommodated, triaging the case (when possible) and only referring true emergencies to emergency clinics.
- For any case that's been assessed, calling and speaking with one of the veterinarians at the emergency hospital prior to transfer so that any further guidance for the client can be relayed.
- Informing clients prior to referral that wait times at emergency hospitals for less urgent patients may be longer than usual at any time of day, and that specialty services may not be available on the same day the client presents through emergency.

The impact of COVID-19 on veterinary medicine is an evolving situation. Ontario's emergency hospitals thank you for your continued patience as the profession continues to navigate these challenging times.



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