



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Veterinary Examining Board

March 25, 2020

Providing Veterinary Care Following the 'Safer at Home' Order

Gov. Tony Evers has directed the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to issue the "[Safer at Home](#)" order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Under the order, veterinary care is considered an *essential service*, and clinics are encouraged to remain open and comply with social distancing requirements, making reasonable efforts to maintain 6 feet between customers and staff.

The order is effective from 8 a.m. on Wednesday, March 25, to 8 a.m. on Friday, April 24. It states that *nonessential* veterinary care should be avoided. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Veterinary Examining Board (VEB) encourage veterinarians to consider required testing and vaccinations that have a significant animal health or public health risk as essential services.

Rabies vaccinations, animal movement testing, and issuance of certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs) should be considered essential if you can reasonably and safely provide those services during this emergency. Additionally, we encourage clinics and solo practitioners to be available to:

- **Provide short-term extensions of prescriptions by phone, if it is medically appropriate.** This requires a pre-existing veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR).
- **Treat patients using telemedicine in situations where it is reasonable and medically appropriate to do so.** A VCPR

may not be established using telemedicine, but appropriate medical actions can be taken without a physical exam, or visit to the premises, if there is an existing VCPR. There is no statutory or administrative rule that sets a time frame on frequency of physical exams, or visits to the premises, to maintain a valid VCPR. While annual exams and routine visits to a premises are the standard in most situations, given the current circumstances, you should use sound judgement regarding whether a physical exam or visit is necessary, and what is appropriate based on the medical concern.

The VEB understands these are exceptional times, and that the health of our animals and the public are our primary focus. We encourage you to be medically responsible during this time, and to provide the necessary services. Be sure to accurately document all treatment, including the circumstances of any deviation for standard protocol in your records.

Not being available to provide these services to your clients may result in animal welfare issues, as emergency clinics without existing VCPRs will be unable to provide services using telemedicine and may struggle to accommodate the influx of new patients.

Visit the [State of Wisconsin COVID-19 webpage](#) to find resources from various agencies and answers to critical questions.



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Division of Food and Recreational Safety

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