



Guidelines for NJ Equine Veterinarians during COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has significantly impacted the Healthcare profession as a whole. On 3/23/20, Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 109](#) suspending all elective surgeries and invasive procedures involving medical and dental procedures performed on adults. The Governor also instituted a Statewide “[Stay at Home Order](#)” and closure of all non-essential retail businesses. NJ healthcare professionals, including veterinarians and their associated staff, are considered “essential businesses” and should remain operational. It is recommended that veterinarians provide only “essential veterinary services” during this pandemic time. While the NJAEP cannot prescribe what services are “essential,” below are some guidelines for consideration. Additionally, veterinarians should formulate a risk analysis as to whether the benefits of performing the procedure on the animal, outweighs the human risks of COVID-19 exposure.

Veterinarians should consider the answers to the following questions when determining what veterinary services are “essential.”

1. Is this procedure necessary to save a life?
2. Is this procedure necessary to prevent zoonotic disease?
3. Is this procedure necessary to reduce pain and/or suffering?
4. Is this procedure elective and/or could it be safely postponed?
5. Will this procedure require valuable medical resources?
6. Will this procedure increase person-to-person contact and potential exposure of COVID-19?

While veterinarians are using their professional judgment above, they should remain conscientious of the following:

- Medical resources are becoming increasingly limited, especially as it relates to personal protective equipment. Non-essential services will continue to drain these resources and conservation is highly recommended. The NJVMA strongly encourages all NJ

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veterinarians to suspend elective surgeries, non-emergency procedures, and well visits in order to limit exposure risk and conserve needed personal protective equipment.

- The overall health and safety of veterinarians, staff, owners, trainers, barn-workers, associated families, and community at large is of paramount importance and a responsibility of the practicing veterinarian when veterinary procedures are performed. Veterinarians should institute measures to promote social distancing and the mitigation of cross-contamination.
- Veterinarians are often questioned on diseases of all species by our staff, owners, trainers, barn-workers, etc. Providing factual and reputable resources regarding COVID-19 should be considered.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have significant physical, emotional, and financial implications to the equine industry including our peers.
- Veterinarians have always maintained an exceptional level of professional decorum and assurance within our community. The current pandemic is no exception.

Be it cliché, we are all in this together. Veterinarians are often part of the solution rather than the problem. Our government agencies have had to make excruciatingly difficult decisions for the safety of human lives. While we are all a part of those decisions, we remain advocates for our animals.

Resources

- <https://aaep.org/resources/covid-19-resources-veterinarians>
- <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>
- https://cdn.ymaws.com/njvma.org/resource/resmgr/hot_topics/covid_19_njvma_revised_03192.pdf

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