



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Serving Georgia Veterinarians Since 1906*

## VIRTUAL TOWN HALL ON COVID-19

3/26/2020

### Regulatory Issues Q&A

*Please note that there are answers in this document that have now changed due to the Executive Order issued by Governor Brian Kemp on Thursday, 4/2. We will strike through what was valid on 3/26 and provide the correct answer as of 4/2.*

#### Panelist:

- **Dr. Jill Lancaster**, *GVMA President*
- **Dr. Lee Myers**, *USDA APIS VIC*
- **Don Riddick Esq.**, *GVMA Legal Expert*

#### **Dr. Jill Lancaster, GVMA PRESIDENT**

**Q:** Gov. Brian Kemp announced a series of measures Monday to try to curb the spread of coronavirus, instituting a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people. How does the 10-person limit affect us?

**A:** ~~The 10 person limit does apply to veterinary clinics and if you don't have room to practice social distancing of 6 feet, you could be at risk of being closed down if reported. To stay within that 10 person limit for larger clinics, you should consider using teams of people/shifts to stay within the limit.~~ The Executive Order of Governor Kemp invalidates this order for those businesses that are included in the Department of Homeland Security's Critical Infrastructure list (veterinarians are included. These businesses may stay open but most comply with the following 16 requirements outlined in the Executive Order:

1. Screening and evaluating workers who exhibit signs of illness, such as a fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, or shortness of breath;
2. Requiring workers who exhibit signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention;
3. Enhancing sanitation of the workplace as appropriate;
4. Requiring hand washing or sanitation by workers at appropriate places within the business location;
5. Providing personal protective equipment as available and appropriate to the function and location of the worker within the business location;
6. Prohibiting gatherings of workers during working hours;



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Serving Georgia Veterinarians Since 1906*

7. Permitting workers to take breaks and lunch outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in such other areas where proper social distancing is attainable;
8. Implementing teleworking for all possible workers;
9. Implementing staggered shifts for all possible workers;
10. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, wherever possible;
11. Delivering intangible services remotely wherever possible;
12. Discouraging workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment;
13. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment and tools;
14. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact in the workplace; and
15. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen; and
16. Suspending the use of Personal Identification Number ("PIN") pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture and any other credit card receipt signature requirements to the extent such suspension is permitted by agreements with credit card companies and credit agencies.

The Executive Order and a FAQ about the Executive Order are posted on the GVMA Website.

**Q: How do local ordinances affect us?**

**A:** ~~If your local government issues an order, you must comply with it. If your county has a shelter in place rule, you can still be open unless you are not designated as an essential business in that order. We are not aware of any communities where this is the case, but if that does happen in your community, please contact the GVMA and we will be in touch with your local authorities.~~ The Executive Order issued by Governor Kemp on 4/2 invalidates all existing county and city ordinances that were in place.

**Q: Will the State Board of Veterinary Medicine be changing anything regarding our CE requirements?**

**A:** The State Board of Veterinary Medicine met on Tuesday morning and they decided that the 15 hours of online learning currently in the regulations is sufficient. They are considering a change in the LEAP requirement that would



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Serving Georgia Veterinarians Since 1906*

need to be approved by the Governor so we will let you know when we hear anything on that. Please note that the GVMA has not cancelled any of our CE events—we have just postponed them (and all of our scheduled events include a LEAP component). You can find an updated CE calendar on our website.

**Q: Will any of the telemedicine requirements be changed?**

**A:** The State Board also decided at that meeting that there will be **no changes** to the current telemedicine rules and regulations. To refresh your memory on that, to practice telemedicine in the state of Georgia still requires a valid VCPR, that you have seen the animal in the last 12 months and you must have informed consent. There is a section on our website that was prepared by one of tonight's panelists, our legal expert, Don Riddick, that spells out the detail on that so please check that if you are unsure of what any of these terms mean or require.

You may have seen that the FDA announced on 3/24 that it intends to temporarily suspend enforcement of certain requirements in order to allow veterinarians to better utilize telemedicine to address animal health needs during the pandemic. That press release is on the GVMA website under the FDA heading. Please read in the press release, "Although the FDA intends to temporarily suspend certain federal VCPR requirements, veterinarians still need to consider state VCPR requirements that may exist in their practice area."

**Q: Are there any updates from the Pharmacy Board?**

**A:** Policy #14 of the Georgia Board of Pharmacy provides for refills of certain medication for up to 30 days for persons in the areas covered by a State of Emergency declared by the Governor of the State of Georgia. There have been no changes to compounding.

## **Dr. Lee Myers - USDA APIS VIC**

**Q: What is the policy for testing companion animals for coronavirus testing?**

**A:** USDA APHIS has posted guidance on the One Health website:  
[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA\\_One\\_Health](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_One_Health)

**Q: Will animals be tested for coronavirus?**

**A:** There are no known cases of active infection with SARS-CoV-2 in domestic animals including pets at this time. Because the situation is ever-evolving, public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals out of an abundance of caution. The decision to test will be made collaboratively between local, state or federal public and animal health officials.



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Serving Georgia Veterinarians Since 1906*

At this time, testing for companion animals will only be done if animal and public health officials agree testing should occur due to a link to a known human case of COVID-19. We will not be testing the general companion animal population.

**Q: Who will collect the samples from animals?**

**A:** After the decision is made to test, the state animal health officials will designate a state appointed veterinarian, USDA accredited veterinarian, or Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD) to collect the sample using appropriate personal protective equipment and sample collection methods.

State animal health laboratories can/will conduct animal testing, but any positive samples would need to be confirmed through additional testing by USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory.

## **Don Riddick Esq., GVMA LEGAL EXPERT**

**Q: How is my practice restricted by law at this time?**

**A:** ~~We talked earlier about the 10 people with the 6' foot distancing from the Governor's order. There are really any other restrictions at the moment other than those of the Governor's and municipal orders in the Atlanta, Savannah, and Athens areas. All of those executive orders deem veterinarians essential.~~

Governor Kemp's 4/3 order designated veterinarians as part of the Critical Infrastructure established by the Department of Homeland Security. This is because veterinarians perform a critical function for humans, including care of assistance, police, bomb, and other working dogs we need during this crisis. Veterinarians work with the departments of health and agriculture to stop the spread of zoonotic diseases and detect any mutation in COVID 19 that might affect animal populations. And veterinarians will perform a critical role in animal control and keeping people in quarantine by caring for their companion and therapeutic animals.

~~In general, you can continue to practice as you have before. Having said that, we just talked about the legal implications of having invitees and any hazards that you have to disclose. You aren't required to do any business right now but you are permitted to under the orders that we are aware of today.~~ According to the Governor's order, your business must comply with the following:

1. Screening and evaluating workers who exhibit signs of illness, such as a fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, or shortness of breath;



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Serving Georgia Veterinarians Since 1906*

2. Requiring workers who exhibit signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention;
3. Enhancing sanitation of the workplace as appropriate;
4. Requiring hand washing or sanitation by workers at appropriate places within the business location;
5. Providing personal protective equipment as available and appropriate to the function and location of the worker within the business location;
6. Prohibiting gatherings of workers during working hours;
7. Permitting workers to take breaks and lunch outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in such other areas where proper social distancing is attainable;
8. Implementing teleworking for all possible workers;
9. Implementing staggered shifts for all possible workers;
10. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, wherever possible;
11. Delivering intangible services remotely wherever possible;
12. Discouraging workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment;
13. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment and tools;
14. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact in the workplace; and
15. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen; and
16. Suspending the use of Personal Identification Number ("PIN") pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture and any other credit card receipt signature requirements to the extent such suspension is permitted by agreements with credit card companies and credit agencies.

One of the things to note—even though you are not restricted by law at this time, you are not required by law to see the owner and the patient at the same time. Drop off services are effective—the practice act does not require that you see the owner and the patient at the same time.