



# GEORGIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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## VIRTUAL TOWN HALL ON COVID-19

3/26/2020

### Veterinary Practice Q&A

#### Panelists:

- **Dr. Robert Cobb**, *State Veterinarian*
- **Dr. Julie Gabel**, *State Public Health Veterinarian*

**Q:** Any restrictions on procedures? Should we be doing routine procedures?

**A:** **(Gabel)** We are starting to widespread experience shortages in PPE in human medical facilities and hospital systems – some are re-using masks and other equipment. Human hospitals experiencing shortages can request PPE through the State Operations Center at GEMA but supplies are limited. Veterinary practices should consider taking an inventory of their PPE supplies and consider if or how they might need to ration their knowing that they may not have access to additional PPE in the coming weeks due to widespread shortages.

The Department of Public Health Administrative Order doesn't specify that level of detail other than veterinary practice is deemed an essential business. Human healthcare facilities are postponing elective procedures but clearly a very different situation due to the fact that they are making preparations for a tremendous surge in patients due to COVID-19. I personally think immunizations are critical, particularly with regard to rabies as we don't want companion animals at risk and also for the zoonotic potential of some of the other diseases.

**A:** **(Cobb)** As mentioned in the guidance documents from Homeland Security and DPH, veterinarians are essential to maintain animal and public health. However, I believe this status does not give a free pass to do things that are non-essential. The Governor has issued several Executive Orders and some local governments have issued local ordinances that place restrictions on society. They should be followed.

I feel that disease prevention is as important as disease treatment. In this time of COVID-19, I feel that routine annual check-ups and vaccinations can and should be postponed within a reasonable time. On the other hand, Initial vaccinations of puppies and kittens for zoonotic (Rabies) and life threatening diseases are needed in a timely manner. An evaluation of the risk to the patient and staff should be determined in making the decision whether or not to postpone vaccine visits. I feel that veterinarians should do their part to minimize the spread of this virus. Practice owners should conserve and balance their supply of PPE.