

Guidance for veterinary practices during the 2nd national lockdown in England, November 2020

On 31 October the Prime Minister announced that [England would enter a national lockdown](#) from Thursday 5 November to Wednesday 2 December. Based on the information provided by the government, the British Veterinary Association has issued the following guidance for veterinary practices:

1. Veterinary practices are essential businesses and can stay open

Veterinary practices provide essential animal health and welfare services, including keeping the food supply chain going, and can therefore stay open during the lockdown. Members of the public are permitted to leave home to access veterinary services in line with veterinary advice. We urge animal owners to always call ahead before visiting a vet practice and to respect the professional judgement of the team in assessing whether or not the animal needs to be seen.

2. Practices must continue to work in Covid-safe ways

All practices must have measures in place to ensure good biosecurity practices, strict social distancing, and minimal contact between colleagues. Continue to work in small teams and pairs and wear appropriate PPE to reduce risk of transmission. Practices should involve all colleagues as far as possible in conversations about safe working practices. Some practices may choose to continue to keep clients outside of the building and/or outside of consulting rooms. Vets carrying out ambulatory visits should continue to follow all their safe working protocols, including carrying out risk assessments.

3. Members of the veterinary team should work from home if possible

In line with the strong stay at home message, veterinary practice colleagues should work from home if possible, for example admin and support staff and vets/VNs who are able to undertake triage calls or remote assessments/consultations from home.

4. Veterinary professionals should exercise clinical judgement to assess and triage essential animal health and welfare needs in the context of the lockdown

Although members of the public are permitted to travel to access veterinary services, the overall message of the national lockdown is to stay at home. Veterinary professionals should therefore assess cases in that context and exercise clinical judgement as to what constitutes essential animal health and welfare during the lockdown. This includes providing veterinary care to prevent an animal health and welfare issue, as well as to address a current issue. In some cases, it will be appropriate to delay seeing an animal for the duration of the lockdown and we are asking clients to respect the vet's decision. Veterinary professionals should consult the RCVS flowchart and guidance to help with this assessment.

5. Support neighbouring practices and be mindful of working across national borders

Veterinary practices should continue to support neighbouring practices (for example, those who experience staff shortages due to illness or self-isolation) to ensure continuity of veterinary services within a geographic area. Practices working across national borders need to be mindful of the rules for clients on either side of the border.

For ongoing advice and guidance please visit the [BVA Coronavirus Information Hub](#) or email c19@bva.co.uk

For legal and HR advice, BVA members can call the [BVA legal helpline](#) (you will need your BVA number to hand to access this service – you can find this at the top of any email from BVA).

For the latest updates please visit: www.bva.co.uk/coronavirus

For additional species-specific advice please visit relevant veterinary associations' websites