



AKVMA E-NEWS

March 20, 2020

ANCHORAGE MAYOR BERKOWITZ ISSUES EMERGENCY ORDER — What Does This Mean for Veterinarians?

Yesterday, Anchorage Mayor Berkowitz issued an order that includes veterinarians in the municipality of Anchorage **to cancel or postpone all non-urgent or non-emergency procedures** to help preserve personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies for COVID-19 response. For purposes of the order, PPE is clothing and equipment worn to minimize exposure to biohazards including latex or nitrile exam gloves, N95 masks, surgical masks, medical gowns, and face shields that protect eyes. [READ MORE](#) on the Emergency Order. (in effect until 10 p.m. on April 14, 2020). **The Municipality of Anchorage also includes Eagle River, Chugiak, Birchwood, and Girdwood.**

Today we received this press release to clarify the Mayor's order.

[PRESS RELEASE from MAYOR'S OFFICE—MARCH 20, 2020](#)

What is urgent or emergency procedures?

Unfortunately AKVMA was not consulted or alerted to the mayor's emergency order prior to the release. AKVMA has immediately reached out to the American Veterinary Medical Association for guidance on defining urgent or emergency care. The AVMA has responded, *"We are not defining what constitutes an urgent or emergency procedure; this should be left to the veterinarian's professional judgement."*

What does this mean for veterinary practices in the Anchorage area?

AKVMA recommends using professional judgement. Considerations should be taken for zoonotic disease prevention, food safety and food security, and animal welfare, as these are essential veterinary functions. Some general guidelines are:

- Stop any **elective surgical procedures that use PPE** (latex or nitrile exam gloves, N95 masks, surgical masks, medical gowns and face shields).
- The definition of "elective" can vary according to client and practitioner but, in general, elective surgeries may include spays and neuters, dental cleanings, and any other care that could be deferred without causing pain or suffering to patients or do not risk spread of infectious or zoonotic disease. Medical problems that cause patient discomfort that can only be alleviated by a procedure needing PPE are not "elective."
- The American Dental Association has released a document on guidance for dentists, this may be helpful for making judgements about dental treatment. [READ MORE](#).
- Patient care, including examinations and vaccinations, can continue as they do not require PPE but practitioners should use discretion regarding unnecessary clinic traffic and interpersonal contact due to the mandate of social distancing. Consider utilizing AVMA's [OWNER CONTACT GUIDELINES](#) and keeping your veterinary teams healthy.

MEDICAL SUPPLY SHORTAGE

AKVMA is hearing from several other states that veterinary clinics are starting to be contacted by health departments or health agencies to request protective patient equipment (PPE), particularly masks and gloves. It is advisable to maintain supplies for your practice needs however AVMA issued a statement March 18 asking for veterinarians to take actions to conserve PPE. [READ MORE](#). The emergency order in Anchorage also includes, upon order, that PPE supplies or needed medical equipment be made available to health care practitioners responding to COVID-19.

Keep in mind that veterinarians will not necessarily be allocated any additional PPE in the near future so it is wise to conserve. Maintain enough supplies to be able to continue to provide essential services.

[Surgical Mask Shortages in Veterinary Hospitals](#)
[FDA's Surgical Mask and Gown Conservation Strategies \(extended use of masks, reusable rather than disposable gowns\)](#)

[CDC resources on healthcare PPE and infection control](#)

AVMA is asking that veterinarians, practices/practice groups, and veterinary distributors with information about any shortages email AVMA at corona-virus@avma.org. Please include as much information as possible about the product and its manufacturer/distributor.

WHAT AKVMA IS DOING?

Letter to the Governor requesting veterinary services be deemed essential.

Survey of veterinary PPE supplies that could be available for human health care.

Consultation and coordination with state and federal agencies and veterinary associations.

KEEP CONNECTED!

Contact any of [AKVMA board members](#) or email info@akvma.org with concerns or questions as we continue to protect our teams, patients, and public health.