

## **Infection prevention and control update – 28 May 2021**

This document provides updated guidelines related to practices associated with reducing the risk of contracting COVID-19 in your small animal veterinary practice.

The following documents on the AVA COVID-19 hub:

[AVA Infection prevention and control for veterinary practitioners](#) (19 March 2020)

[Risk management for workplaces V2](#) (23 March 2020), and

[Veterinary home visits during COVID-19](#)

are still relevant and should be read in conjunction with this document.

All the listed websites were up to date at the time of writing this document. Please ensure that the websites have not been updated and if there is information or specific requirements for your State or Territory.

The following topics are discussed:

- Activities and planning
- Hand hygiene product recommendations
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Client interactions
- Risks from animals
- COVID-19 vaccination information
- Resources
- References

## Activities and planning

- Check hand sanitisers (60-80% alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)) are available, regularly filled up and located at:
  - entrance / exit points
  - every consultation room
  - reception desk
  - mobile work trolleys
  - high staff traffic areas
  - multi-use patient care areas such as wet prep rooms, imaging areas, wards, banks of cages <sup>1</sup>
- Consider the process if a client, staff member or family member is COVID-19 positive. Will you be able to determine who has visited your veterinary practice?

## Contact tracing apps

- National [COVIDSafe app](#)
  - Queensland [Check In Qld app](#)
  - Victoria [QR code app and digital record keeping for contact tracing](#)
  - South Australia [COVID Safe Check-In](#)
  - Western Australia [COVID-19 coronavirus: SafeWA](#)
  - Tasmania [Check in TAS App](#)
  - NSW [Check in to a COVID Safe business on the Service NSW app](#)
  - Northern Territory [The Territory Check In](#)
  - Australian Capital Territory [Check In CBR App](#)
- Develop a checklist/plan for activities that need to be performed to remain COVID safe or need to be escalated if you are required to go into lockdown. Every practice is unique so these checklists/plans are unlikely to be exactly the same practice to practice. Nominate at least one person in each practice to champion safe practices and coordinate required activities. Items to consider include and are not limited to:
    - Phone message and door sign
    - Social media messages / alerts
    - Need to reschedule appointments
    - Visitor policy – including company representatives and students. Are all visitors by appointment only?
    - Chair spacing / availability
    - Messages on vaccination reminders
    - Bulk text messaging of clients
    - PPE requirements
    - Mask use guidelines for staff

## Hand hygiene product recommendations

- Ensure hand sanitiser (ABHR) is 60-80% alcohol as these are the most effective <sup>1</sup>.
- The use of hand sanitiser (ABHR) is the recommended hand hygiene practice in healthcare settings. Hand washing should be performed when hands are visibly soiled <sup>1</sup>.

- When hands are visibly soiled, soap and water should be used and hands dried with single use disposable paper towels <sup>1</sup>. Multi-use cloth towels should not be used to dry hands.
- Posters for hand hygiene are available from the World Health Organisation and Hand Hygiene Australia and should be available near sinks and hand sanitiser dispensers.
- [How to handrub and handwash?](#)
- [How to handrub?](#)
- [How to handwash?](#)

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Continue with regular and frequent cleaning (cleaning with detergent and water is most effective to remove microorganisms, followed by rinsing and drying <sup>2</sup>) and disinfecting high touch points in your veterinary practice. Disinfecting is performed when infectious agents such as blood or bodily fluids may have contaminated the surface <sup>2</sup>.
  - High touch points include and are not restricted to:
    - Door handles
    - Telephones
    - Keyboards/mouse(s)
    - Chairs
    - Desks
    - Consultation tables
    - Eftpos machines
    - Photocopiers/printers/label printers
    - Fridge doors Kettles and other appliances
    - Hand rails
    - Light and power point switches
    - Basins and taps
    - Imaging equipment and other diagnostic equipment
  - Develop a cleaning schedule. Safe Work Australia has provided a table [COVID-19 REcommended cleaning: Supplementary information](#) <sup>3</sup>
- For disinfectants to be most effective, they must:
  - Have the correct contact time as per manufacturer's instructions. Read the label of cleaning and disinfectant products used.
  - Be applied to a clean, dry surface (clean before you disinfect)
  - Be used at the right concentration
  - Be effective for those microorganisms <sup>2</sup>.
- Disinfectant requirements
  - Greater than or equal to 70% alcohol
  - Quaternary ammonium compounds (QuAC)<sup>2</sup> such as benzalkonium chloride
  - Diluted household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) <sup>2</sup> (See [Cleaning and bleach dilutions](#) )

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has compiled a list of disinfectant products with specific claims against SARS CoV-2. Find the list here: [Disinfectants for use against COVID-19 in the ARTG for legal supply in Australia](#)

### **Client interactions**

Continue to screen all clients and visitors before they present to your veterinary practice.

Ask clients:

1. If they have been unwell with any flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, headache),
  2. Have they or has anyone in their household had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, or with a person who is awaiting COVID-19 test results?
  3. Have they been in any known hot spots, quarantine or overseas in past 14 days?
- Prompt clients to perform hand hygiene, particularly after sneezing or coughing. [Hygiene Safe Work Australia](#)
  - Know the maximum number of people you should have in the waiting area.
  - Maintain physical distance as much as possible. [Physical distancing Safe Work Australia](#)
  - Ensure ventilation systems are well maintained. Open windows if able. [Improving ventilation in indoor workplaces](#)

### **Mobile small animal veterinarians**

- Continue to screen all clients at the initial interaction (see questions above).
- Repeat screening questions on arrival at the client's home.
- Prepare clients to provide their own pens, tissues etc
- Maintain physical distancing of 1.5m as much as possible. This may be difficult depending on the type of consultation and staff availability.
- Encourage consultations to be outside or in a well-ventilated area and with open windows if possible.
- Carry a mask and eye protection in your kit at all times.
- Offer a mask to the client if you are unable to maintain 1.5 m distancing.
- Carry clean personal protective equipment (PPE) including mask, eye protection, gown and gloves. Sequence for putting one and removing PPE <sup>4</sup> can be found at [Putting on \(Donning\) and removing \(Doffing\) PPE \(CDC\)](#)
- Maintain records of who is present at the household at the time of your visit.
- Additional information can be found at [In home services Safe Work Australia](#)

### **Risks from animals**

Human to human contact is the main source of transmission of COVID-19 <sup>5,6</sup>. There is no evidence that companion (small) animals are involved in the spread of COVID-19 to humans <sup>7,8</sup>.

Several animal species such as dogs, cats, ferrets and mink have been reported to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 <sup>9</sup>.

Precautionary behaviours are recommended for individuals with pets who are SARS-CoV-2 positive. All individuals associated with the pet should practice good hand hygiene before and after handling animals and their food/water bowls <sup>6</sup>.

Individuals diagnosed or suspected to have COVID-19 and those in the household associated with the individual should avoid:

- Close contact with the pet
- Kissing or being licked by the animals
- Sharing food with the animals <sup>6</sup>
- Close interactions with people outside the household <sup>7</sup>

### **COVID-19 Vaccination**

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout is underway in Australia. Please check the Safe Work Australia <sup>10</sup> website for further information regarding Employer and Worker obligations. The information contained here is not complete and must be read in conjunction with information contained at:

[Vaccination Safe Work Australia](#)

and

[Is it true? Are COVID-19 vaccines mandatory in Australia? Australian Government Department of Health](#)

The COVID-19 vaccine:

- is free
- is voluntary

Employees should advise their employer/manager if they are unable to have the COVID-19 vaccine because they are immunocompromised <sup>11</sup>.

## **Resources**

### **Hand Hygiene**

The [National Hand Hygiene Initiative](#) <sup>1</sup> has online learning modules. These require you to login to the NHHI website. All courses are free and while focused on human health care, the principles are the same.

Recommended courses include:

- Principles of infection prevention and control (includes hand hygiene, sharps management, cleaning of the environment, transmission based precautions)
- Cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation

### **COVID-19 Safe Work Australia**

Safe work Australia has numerous resources available and information directed towards employers, workers and small business. Information regarding cleaning, vaccination, PPE, masks and many other topics are located here.

Go to: [COVID-19 Information for workplaces Safe Work Australia](#)

Please check your local State/Territory web pages for specific information.

Posters and signs for the workplace [Signage and posters - COVID-19](#)

### **COVID-19 Vaccination information**

[New COVID-19 vaccine WHS guidance for workplaces](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#)

## References

- 1. Hand Hygiene Australia. National Hand Hygiene Initiative Manual.: Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care,; 2019. p. 106.
- 2. National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council; 2019. p. 362.
- 3. Safe Work Australia. Recommended cleaning:Supplementary information. 2021. p. 21.
- 4. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Sequence for putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) [Infographic]. Center for Disease Control and Prevention,; n/d.
- 5. Department of Agriculture WatE. Domestic animals and COVID-19. 2020 [updated 30 September 2020; cited 2021]. Available from: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/coronavirus/animals>
- 6. World Organisation for Animal Health. COVID-19. 2021. Available from: <https://www.oie.int/en/what-we-offer/emergency-and-resilience/covid-19/>
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- 8. Bonilauri P, Rugna G. Animal Coronaviruses and SARS-COV-2 in Animals, What Do We Actually Know? Life (Basel, Switzerland) 2021;11(2):123.
- 9. Selleck P. COVID-19 in animals: contact with humans and potential transmissions. Microbiology Australia 2021;42(1):27.
- 10. Safe Work Australia. COVID-19 Information for workplaces: Vaccination. 2021 [updated 7 Apr 2021; cited May 2021]. Available from: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/vaccination?tab=tab-toc-worker>
- 11. Safe Work Australia. New COVID-19 vaccine WHS guidance for workplaces. 2021 [updated Monday 22 February 2021]. Available from: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/media-centre/news/new-covid-19-vaccine-whs-guidance-workplaces>