



## New Hampshire Veterinary Medical Association

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March 24, 2020

The Honorable Christopher T. Sununu  
Office of the Governor  
State House  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu,

The New Hampshire Veterinary Medical Association and New Hampshire Veterinary Technician Association thank the Governor's office, the New Hampshire State Legislature and all our state workers for their continued around the clock efforts in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate our government's forward-thinking actions to protect its citizens and workforce.

The New Hampshire Veterinary Medical Association (NHVMA) and the New Hampshire Veterinary Technician Association (NHVTA) join the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), and the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) in urging you to classify veterinary personnel as "essential workers" during any COVID-19 related quarantine or shelter in place scenario.

Risk mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 have been announced by the federal government and many state and local governments. In some localities, such as San Francisco, and states, like Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York, veterinary practices are appropriately considered "essential businesses." Other states that have recently issued shelter in place orders, Illinois, Connecticut and New Jersey have all designated veterinary businesses as essential health operations.

Veterinary practices in New Hampshire provide the following essential services:

1. Veterinary practices provide medical and surgical care daily for critically ill and injured animals.
2. Frontline veterinary practitioners and staff are among the healthcare professionals who provide surveillance for diseases deemed reportable by state and federal governments, including zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, influenza and Lyme disease. They are also responsible for issuing certificates of veterinary inspection that are required for the movement of animals between states and countries, including those entering the food supply.
3. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other support staff are an integral part of our nation's food and fiber industries. Veterinary care is critical to ensure that only healthy animals enter the food supply.
4. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other support staff provide care for service and therapy animals, supporting both animal and human welfare.
5. Services may also include overseeing the care of laboratory animals, and caring for rare, threatened, and endangered animals in zoos, aquaria, wildlife rehabilitation clinics, and wildlife facilities.
6. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other support staff are trusted professionals involved in disaster situations. While perhaps different from a statutory and regulatory perspective, the training, education, and experience of veterinarians and our staff in disasters are clearly transferable skills in whatever COVID-19 risk mitigation is deemed necessary.

For the reasons listed above, we urge lawmakers and state executives to protect and preserve public health and ensure that veterinary practices are clearly stated to be “essential businesses” and thereby allowed to continue to provide critical services in our communities. We, in turn, will strongly encourage veterinary professionals in New Hampshire to use their best medical judgement and postpone elective procedures when possible, provide advice and treatment through ‘telemedicine’ when appropriate, and limit interactions between clients and staff as much as possible.

As NAVTA President Ken Yagi said, “NAVTA is cognizant that some practices may need to close in order to protect the health and wellbeing of staff and community members. Those closures, however, will only increase the demand on hospitals and services that remain open, making it even more necessary for personnel to be able to get to work.” The NHVMA and NHVTA echo these statements and should the Governor need to issue an executive order for

shelter-in-place we encourage our Governor and legislature to join other states and cities in classifying veterinary teams as essential personnel during this uniquely challenging time.

Sincerely,

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