



## COVID-19 – ADVICE FOR ANIMAL RELATED BUSINESSES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (This guidance is subject to change depending on Government advice)

### Introduction

This guidance has been updated in the light of revised Government advice (11.5.20) on Coronavirus to balance public health protection requirements and the need for businesses to keep working. There remains no evidence that pets are implicated in the transmission of Coronavirus to people and infection of the pet is unlikely, but that there is some risk of virus being carried by pets and their belongings. However the risk of transmission between infected clients and business staff remains and the disease status of the client, if known, will assist in risk assessment.

The status of a household is an important element of risk assessment. Clearly contact with an infected or self-isolating household carries a higher risk than with any other. The risk to the household of shielding or vulnerable people is greater and therefore requires more precautions. Because there is some possibility of the pet carrying virus between households it is appropriate to evaluate the risk in each circumstance to minimise the public health consequences. It is inevitable that the status of a household can change from one group to another and that the precautions suitable for the pet will change at the same time.

The simple precaution of washing hands for twenty seconds as frequently as possible should now be intrinsic in every activity. In this advice document it is assumed that hand washing and social distancing are intrinsic in all activities.

CFSG has produced a [handover protocol](#) between people walking friends' and neighbours' dogs. The protocol should also be used when handing over dogs between a business and client.

Where it is recommended that a pet is wiped down the cloth used should be disposable and similar to the size and material of a J-cloth. It should be thoroughly wetted and squeezed first, used to wipe down the pet and should then be disposed of directly into a waste bin. Do not re-use the cloth. You should not use any disinfectant.

Social distancing rules must be observed throughout every activity. This is a 2 metre distance between each individual. If at all possible, and if it is safe to do so, any handovers should be done outside. Risk assessments need to be undertaken to ensure the business is working in a safe way to protect members of staff and the public. The principles have been set out by government [here](#).

Guidance on which journeys are appropriate is taken from UK Government [Guidance on Social Distancing](#) published 11.5.20.

In all circumstances where payment is included in a process the use of cash should be avoided. Where possible payment should be made using a credit or debit card or by electronic banking.



You should check that your insurance company is prepared to cover you for any activity undertaken during this period.

### BOARDING ESTABLISHMENTS

Most boarding establishments will have very low occupancy rates owing to cancelled holidays, however there is a significant requirement to care for the pets of people hospitalised from coronavirus and for key workers, shielded and vulnerable people who may not be able to care for their pets. Boarding establishments may make arrangements with shelters and rescues if needed. Pets should only be admitted or sent home by appointment to ensure you only have a single client on the premises at any one time. Animals being collected or taken by their owner to the boarding establishment may well be carrying the virus on their coat, or on belongings such as leads. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Any material such as collars, toys and food bowls arriving with an animal should be thoroughly washed with soap and water and left to dry in the open air. Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. Pets should be wiped down with a pet safe disposable damp cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards before they are put into the collecting vehicle or admitted.

If an animal is taken from a Coronavirus infected household they should be held in the establishment's isolation facility for three days to ensure no virus is retained on the pet. During that period those pets should be dealt with **after** all others on the premises.

Animal rescue and re-homing organisations may also be under pressure from animals being abandoned and particularly if they have a stray dog contract with the local authority. Boarding establishments may also wish to offer space to them.

Clearly a proportion of any of those animals may not have up to date vaccinations. Veterinary practices may be able to offer vaccination if a disease and public health assessment by the vet shows it to be appropriate and social distancing can be maintained. The boarding establishment's veterinary practice should be contacted for advice regarding this. If, on assessment, the veterinary practice feels vaccination is appropriate, it may be that the risk of a visit by a vet and veterinary nurse is considered less of a public health risk than individual animals being taken to the owner's practice. It is important to increase biosecurity within the boarding establishment to reduce the likelihood of disease. This may be achieved by increased use of disinfectant, personal hygiene by the use of hand gel or hand washing between animals and by better separation of animals. Establishments should be able to provide an enhanced SOP for use in current circumstances to satisfy their local licensing authority.

### HOME BOARDING

Similar to boarding establishments it is likely that most will be little used. Priority should be given to board dogs from households of key workers, or shielded and vulnerable people. Dogs from infected or self-isolating households should not be mixed with others from non-infected households. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed.

All admission and return of dogs should be by appointment only to ensure clients are able to maintain social distance. The home boarder may collect the dog or the client may drop off and collect the dog. You should only have one person dropping off or collecting their dog at a time. If the dog is collected they should be wiped down with a pet safe disposable damp cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards before putting them in the vehicle and the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. When the dog is dropped off at their home it should be wiped down



before entering the house. The home boarder must wash all equipment with soap and water once the dog/s have left. The owner's lead should be retained by them. Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets.

### COMMERCIAL DOG DAY CARE

Commercial day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers, and shielded and vulnerable people who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs may be collected from their home or owners may drop off and collect their dogs by appointment only. This is to ensure clients are able to maintain their social distance from others by only having one client on the premises at a time. If dogs are brought to site owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog with a similar procedure on return.

Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the operator wiping the dog down with a pet safe disposable damp cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards before putting them in the vehicle and the owner retaining all equipment such as leads.

If dogs are collected, only those from households that are not infected or self-isolating should be collected on each trip. If establishments wish to accept dogs from infected or self-isolating households they must be collected and returned separately. Such dogs should not be mixed with those from 'clear' households but may be kept in a completely separate group. Each dog should be wiped down with a disposable pet safe cloth on arrival which should be disposed of properly afterwards. The vehicle must be disinfected between journey if transporting dogs from infected or self-isolating households.

The entire premises must be cleaned and disinfected at the close of each day.

### HOME DOG DAY CARE

Home day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs may be collected from their homes or owners may drop off and collect their dogs by appointment to ensure the maintenance of social distance between clients by only having one client on the premises at a time. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the operator wiping the dog down with a pet safe disposable damp cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards before putting them in the vehicle or taking the dog into the house. The owner should retain all equipment such as leads.

Dogs from households that are infected or self-isolating should not be mixed with others from non-infected households.

Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets, and not transported in a vehicle to exercise unless absolutely necessary.



## DOG WALKERS

Dog walkers can continue to operate and priority should be given to key workers, and shielded and vulnerable people who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs from coronavirus infected or self-isolating households may be walked but if doing so they must be walked **after** dogs from all other households.

The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. Dogs from different households may be walked together as long as dogs from infected or self-isolating households are not mixed with others from non-infected households. Social distancing should be maintained for both the walker and the dogs by keeping the dogs on a lead at all times. Any equipment, including the vehicle if used to transport the dog, must be cleaned and disinfected between dogs.

## GROOMERS

Groomers and their clients should consider whether the necessary human contact and journeys may be better delayed to protect public health. In many cases, groomers may therefore consider that maintaining contact with clients remotely and offering advice to them about their pet's coat is the safest outcome for all concerned.

An owner may take and collect a pet by vehicle to be groomed by appointment. The necessity for an appointment is to ensure social distancing between clients. If dogs are brought to site owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog. You should only have one person in the reception area at a time. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed and should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

Groomers can collect dogs from client's homes as long as they can disinfect their vehicle between collections. Pets from infected or self-isolating households should be collected individually and separately from other dogs in different journeys and **after** pets from other non-infected households. A client may walk their dog to be groomed by appointment. Once the dog has been groomed either the dog may be walked home or the groomer may return the dog. Social distancing should be maintained at all times and the [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads.

Multiple dogs may be taken in at a time where a grooming salon has sufficient space to separate them and for groomers to maintain social distancing whilst working. Dogs from self-isolating or infected households should not be admitted until the household is clear. Admission and return of dogs must be by appointment only to ensure social distancing where the reception area is large enough to do so. Where clients bring their dogs to the salon when possible they should wait in the car until the salon is ready to accept the dog. The reverse procedure should be used for return. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the operator wiping the dog down with a pet safe disposable damp cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards even though they may be bathed later in the procedure.

Mobile groomers may continue to operate providing that they can maintain social distancing. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. The grooming facility must be thoroughly disinfected between pets. Home groomers may operate providing they can maintain social distancing



rules and following the [Government guidance](#) on those working in other people's homes. They should not visit an infected or self-isolating household. All equipment must be disinfected between each home.

### DOG AND CAT BREEDERS

There will be many existing litters of puppies and kittens and some will currently be ready to be re-homed. The ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens (known as Lucy's Law) came into effect on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in England. Although it is recommended not to do so under that legislation and as general best practice, during the Coronavirus pandemic because of travel restrictions, it may be necessary to allow the breeder to take the puppy or kitten to their new home as collection by the purchaser is restricted unless doing so can be combined with a short journey by a single member of the household and social distance can be maintained. For this limited time, the breeder bringing the puppy or kitten to you is acceptable providing the animal is at least eight weeks of age and any viewing of them with their mother and litter mates can be achieved. For the duration of the lockdown in these exceptional circumstances the breeder must ensure that when taking the puppy or kitten to a home address that journey times are minimised, preferably less than six hours, and that the handover can be achieved whilst maintaining social distancing. Alternatively, a commercial transporter licensed for dogs may be used. Only puppies or kittens from a single litter should be transported at a time and should not be taken to an infected or self-isolating household. The person transporting should ensure that the puppy or kitten is provided with comfortable and appropriate accommodation including bedding during transport. It may be necessary to stop to provide water depending on the ambient temperature on the day.

Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the breeder/transporter and purchaser to maintain their social distance. No equipment such as a basket should be given by the breeder to the purchaser.

Paperwork and other checks and documentation should be predominantly completed ahead of the meeting. Prior to the dropping off of the puppy or kitten, the purchaser should be given advice on immediate care of them including what food to purchase and allowing them to settle in their new home.

Breeders who are considering mating a bitch or queen should ensure that they have the facility to be able to allow potential purchasers to view the litter remotely and whether the offspring will have sufficient socialisation in the current pandemic. They should also consider how the offspring can be safely delivered complying with the guidance above.

It may not be possible to vaccinate and microchip puppies or kittens in the current lockdown. Breeders and purchasers should contact their veterinary practice by telephone first for advice. Where there is a high risk of infection with severe disease such as Canine Parvovirus the practice may be able to provide suitable arrangements for vaccination if a disease and public health assessment by the vet shows it to be appropriate and social distancing can be maintained. The breeder's veterinary practice should be contacted for advice prior to sale. If, on assessment, the veterinary practice feels vaccination is appropriate, it may be that the risk of a visit by a vet and veterinary nurse is considered less of a public health risk than individual animals being taken to each purchaser's practice. If vaccination is undertaken the pet should be microchipped at the same time if not already implanted.



### PET RE-HOMING AND RESCUE ORGANISATIONS

Animal rescue and rehoming establishments may continue to rehome pets by offering to transport them to the home of adopters providing that a suitable vehicle is available that can be disinfected between each journey. The CFSG [handover protocol](#) should be used to maintain social distancing. Where appropriate, animals should be bathed or wiped down prior to leaving with a pet-safe, damp disposable cloth which should be properly disposed of afterwards. Animals should not be rehomed to coronavirus infected or self-isolating households or those where someone in the household has symptoms of Coronavirus. Further detail is available [here](#).

Providing a suitable vehicle is available animals may be collected by arrangement from households that are unable to provide adequate care for the animals. Staff should be provided with suitable protective equipment and the CFSG [handover protocol](#) used to maintain social distancing. On arrival at the rehoming establishment the animal should be bathed or wiped down with a pet safe damp disposable cloth which should be properly disposed of afterwards. The animal should be placed in the isolation facility and dealt with **after** all other animals on site. Further detail is available [here](#).

### PET SHOPS AND OTHER BREEDERS

Pet shops have not been required to close and can continue to provide pet food and other essential supplies. Selling pets already in stock or coming through the supply chain may continue under that provision providing adequate recommended social distance and health precautions can be maintained at all times. A decision to sell small pets should be made on an individual basis having made a risk assessment of the pet shop's ability to carry out the function in accordance with government's coronavirus safety guidelines and subject to the ability of staff on duty to provide informed care advice about the particular species being sold. Pet shops can also consider arrangements for home delivery of items.

At point of sale pets should be wiped over with a single-use disposable damp cloth wherever practical and the cloth disposed of properly afterwards. The pet should be placed in a secure container that has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Consideration must be given by breeders as to how the welfare of existing juvenile stock can be maintained whilst the coronavirus measures are in place and where necessary advice should be obtained on how best to maintain the health and welfare of the animals. This can be obtained from their breeder's veterinary surgeon or in the case of a licensed premises such as a pet shop, the veterinary surgeon assigned to the premises under the Licensing of Animal Activities Regulations.

### PET MICROCHIP IMPLANTERS

This guidance is for businesses that provide a microchip implant service. Veterinary practices that implant should follow guidance from the RCVS. Implantation whilst having a pet vaccinated by a vet is the most appropriate solution to comply with compulsory microchip legislation that requires dogs to be microchipped by the age of eight weeks and before change of ownership and for cats. Businesses that provide a microchip implant service may continue to operate providing that they can do so whilst protecting public health by maintaining social distancing and hygiene requirements. Breeders/owners should establish whether microchip implanters are prepared to carry out



microchipping during the coronavirus restrictions. Whilst it is not advised that the public should make a specific journey to get a puppy microchipped, an implanter could visit to implant by appointment. Implanters should not microchip a puppy or kitten in a household which has someone infected with coronavirus or who is self-isolating because of the virus.

Microchipping cannot be achieved safely whilst maintaining social distance as puppies and kittens need to be restrained whilst being implanted so the implanter must take with them an appropriately trained second person from their household to provide the restraint. The litter should be separated from the bitch or queen by the owner and left in a safe and secure area where the implanter can reach them with minimal access to the premises. Once the litter has been implanted all necessary paperwork should be completed online after the implanter has returned home and no paperwork left at the premises except in exceptional circumstances.

After the implanter and assistant return to their household they should thoroughly wash with soap and water and leave to dry any equipment used that cannot be disposed of responsibly. Nothing should be left at the owner's premises.

#### DOG TRAINERS

Dog training classes are not allowed because they require people to gather and would be unable to maintain social distance. However training of dogs is an important element of their social development. Dog trainers may continue to provide advice on training on a one-to-one basis using technology to connect the trainer and client. It may also be possible to run classes by video link. If a trainer can utilise a private area to provide one-to-one training a client might use their exercise period to meet the trainer and it would be acceptable for the client to drive a short distance to the venue. There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times. Owners can leave their dogs with a trainer providing the handover protocol is followed and social distancing is maintained.

**Please scroll down to see the Pet Service Protocol Matrix.**



Annex A

PET SERVICE PROTOCOL MATRIX

	CFSG handover protocols must be observed.	Mixing of dogs from other households which are not infected or self-isolating	Collection or delivery by appointment with social distancing procedure in place	When walking, seek to avoid transport in a vehicle for walks	Wash pet's items, like bowls, toys etc. upon arrival	Wipe down the pet on arrival and departure	Use a different lead to the owner's.	Don't allow other people or pets to come into contact with the dog.	Wash the lead with soap and water once the dog has been returned.	Dogs from infected or self-isolating households
<b>Dog Walking</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ but must be walked at the end of day after all other dogs.
<b>Home Daycare</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ but should not be mixed with others from non-infected households.
<b>Home Boarding</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ but should not be mixed with others from non-infected households





Commercial Daycare	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓ but should not be mixed with others from non-infected households.
Commercial Kennels and Catteries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓ but must be held in isolation facility for 3 days.
Puppy & Kitten Breeding	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
Grooming	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ but should be done after all other dogs at the end of the day and kept separate
Pet Microchip Implanters	✓	✗	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✗
Dog Trainers	✓	✗	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Rescue & Rehoming	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓ but must be held in isolation facility for 3 days