



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

**7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (This guidance is subject to change depending on Government advice)**

### Introduction

To reduce the spread of coronavirus, the government advice to people is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives. To reduce social contact, the Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close. People can travel for work purposes, but only where they cannot work from home. With the exception of those businesses and venues required to close, the government has not required any other businesses to close – indeed it is important for business to carry on not least to ensure the economy keeps working and in the case of pet businesses to help safeguard the welfare of the nation's pets. Pet businesses play a key role in this and should operate within the strict advice on social distancing and hygiene.

Nothing in this document is intended to be anything other than guidance for use in the current extraordinary circumstances that pertain during the controls to prevent spread of coronavirus. It is written to balance the potentially competing interests of public health and the need for the economy and business to keep working.

The aim of this document is to assist animal businesses and breeders to operate in a safe manner to protect the health of their staff and clients. Government is keen to see businesses continue to operate unless they are on the list of explicitly banned businesses and venues. This is subject to businesses complying with the requirements relating to social distancing and hygiene. The public is requested to leave their house only for very limited purposes which means pet owners will not be able to travel to access the services outlined in this document but service providers can travel to them door to door whilst meeting the social distancing and hygiene requirements. See the Government guidance [here](#).

This guidance seeks to provide pet businesses with clear advice as to how they can comply with the requirements mentioned above. All businesses will be able to take advantage of the available government assistance whether they close or not. See <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

**A summary matrix of the advice can be found at the end of this document (Annex A).**

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 activity.

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.

Throughout this document the terms 'key worker', 'shielded person', 'vulnerable person' are those set out in government guidance: [Key Worker](#) [Shielded](#) [Vulnerable](#)

***NB: Please see the Pet Service Protocol Matrix at the end of this document***



## 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 from key workers, shielded and vulnerable people who may not be able to care for their pets. Under the Care Act 2014 in England and Wales, local authorities have a duty to care for those animals, and boarding establishments may wish to offer space. Boarding establishments may also make arrangements with shelters and rescues if needed.

Animals being collected and taken to the boarding establishment may well be carrying the virus on their coat, or on belongings such as leads, although it appears that actual infection is very unlikely. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Any material such as collars, leads, 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. Dogs 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. Cats should also be wiped down. A disposable apron or other appropriate protective clothing should be worn whilst doing so. Where appropriate for the dog's temperament, they may be bathed once arriving at the boarding establishment.

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. It is therefore 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 authority.

## HOME BOARDING

Similar to boarding establishments it is likely that most will be unused. Home boarders may be in a position to offer their services to local authorities. Priority should be given to board dogs from a single household of a key worker, or shielded or vulnerable people or a coronavirus infected or isolating household. The [handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the home boarder collecting the dog, wiping them 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. The home boarder must wash all equipment with soap and water once the dog/s have left. Dogs may be bathed for extra risk prevention in a home boarder's house if the dog is known and the bite risk is understood. An interval of three days should be allowed between boarding dogs from different households to ensure no cross contamination. 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, and not transported in a vehicle to exercise unless absolutely necessary.



### 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. Collection should be on an appointment basis. 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 brought to site, for example by key workers, owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog. Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. Each dog should be bathed where appropriate for the dog's temperament or wiped down with a fresh disposable pet safe cloth on arrival and departure which should be disposed of properly afterwards.

If dogs are collected only dogs from a single household should be collected at a time. Each dog should be bathed where appropriate for the dog's temperament or wiped down with a disposable pet safe cloth on arrival which should be disposed of properly afterwards. The vehicle must be disinfected between journeys.

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. Collection should be on an appointment basis. 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.

Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. On departure the dog should again be wiped down with a disposable pet safe cloth which should be disposed of properly afterwards.

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

### DOG WALKERS

Dog walkers can 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 from coronavirus infected 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. Only dogs from the same household should be walked together and social distancing should be maintained for both the walker and the dogs by keeping the dogs on a lead at all times. Dogs should not be transported away from the house but walked locally unless it is impossible to do so safely. Any equipment, including the vehicle if used to transport the dog, must be cleaned and disinfected between dogs.

Gloves should be worn and disposed of after each household and before returning to a vehicle. There should be minimal contact between the walker and the dog. Walkers should not touch personal items such as phones whilst walking a dog



Groomers and their clients should consider whether the necessary human contact and journeys are essential or in current circumstances may be delayed to protect public health. Grooming services present a challenge as there is a risk that the virus may be carried on the dog's coat. Pets from households with coronavirus present higher risk given the nature of the service. 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. Government Regulations make it clear that an owner taking a pet by vehicle to be groomed is unlikely to be essential travel, however there may be welfare grounds on which grooming may be necessary, particularly if the lockdown persists. 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.

Groomers whose business relies on pets coming to them can continue to work if they collect them and as long as they can disinfect their vehicle between collections and then only pets from one household should be collected at one time. Only one dog may be groomed at a time and the dog should have left the premises, with disinfection of the premises occurring, before the next one is allowed to enter. 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. In all cases payment should be made by card or BACS.

#### 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 is necessary to allow the breeder to take the puppy or kitten to their new home as collection by the purchaser is restricted. This 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 electronically. 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 going to the same household should be taken in each journey so that personal hygiene for the breeder or transporter can be maintained including hand washing after the drop off that can only be achieved once the breeder has returned home. 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.

Handover should take place in a room or space large enough for the breeder/transporter and purchaser to maintain their social distance. Gloves should be worn during the handover, removed before returning to the vehicle and disposed of afterwards. The puppy or kitten should be wiped over with a pet safe damp disposable cloth prior to handover and no equipment such as a basket should be given by the breeder to the purchaser. Doors and gates should only be opened and closed by householder. Time in the property should be kept to the absolute minimum.

Paperwork and other checks and documentation should be predominantly completed ahead of 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. 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 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 vaccination is undertaken the pet should be microchipped at the same time if not already implanted.

### PET RE-HOMING AND RESCUE ORGANISATIONS

Guidance for the future operation of rescue and re-homing organisations will be issued in the next few days.

### PET SHOPS AND OTHER BREEDERS

Pet shops have not been required to close and can continue to provide pet food and other essential supplies. A journey solely to purchase a pet is not considered essential and is not allowed. If pet shops sell pets (other than kittens and puppies which is now banned) they should only do so when the customer has come to the shop to purchase essential items. Selling those 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.

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



Annex A

PET SERVICE PROTOCOL MATRIX

	Collection of pet by operator by appointment	CFSG handover protocols must be observed.	Only dogs from the same household at one time	Only collect dogs from the same household at a time	When walking, don't 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.	Where possible, minimise touching the dog.	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.	Time period between dogs from different households
Dog Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Home Daycare	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	72hrs
Home Boarding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	72hrs
Commercial Daycare	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A
Commercial Kennels and Catteries	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N.A
Puppy & Kitten Breeding	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A
Grooming	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A