



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

Updated 3rd December 2020

(This guidance is subject to change depending on Government advice)

Introduction

This guidance has been updated in the light of revised Government advice (26.11.20) 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 rare with cats and ferrets being at highest risk. Transmission between pets is unusual but cannot be ruled out and ferrets seem to be the most likely to infect each other. There is some risk of virus potentially being carried from person to person on pets and their belongings although scientific assessment is now that such transmission is relatively unlikely. There have been some rare instances where infected owners have passed on infection to their pets but there remains no evidence of onward transmission and the main route of transmission remains person-to-person. 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 vulnerable people is greater and therefore requires more precautions. As 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 regarding coronavirus can change from one group to another and that the precautions suitable for the pet will change at the same time.



The introduction of the tier system further complicates the provision of guidance. This document is based on the Tier 1 restrictions. Where additional action is required in the higher tiers it is noted under each business category. All businesses and venues that are open are expected to follow COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect customers, visitors and workers.

The simple precaution of washing hands for twenty seconds, or using hand sanitiser, as frequently as possible should now be intrinsic in every activity. Therefore, in this advice document it is assumed that hand sanitisation or washing, and social distancing, are included in all activities. [Guidance](#) on the wearing of face masks should also be consulted. Across all tiers, everyone must wear a face covering in most indoor settings, unless they have an exemption. Where social distancing can be maintained outdoors the use of face coverings is not necessary although it is still advised. Hands should be washed or hand sanitiser used before putting a face covering on and after taking it off. Touching the eyes, nose, or mouth is to be avoided and used face coverings should be stored in a plastic bag until they can be washed or disposed of. Single use disposable masks should be disposed of appropriately after use. Re-useable masks should be washed and dried regularly.

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

Social distancing rules must be observed throughout every activity. While social distancing advice has been revised, 2m between individuals should be adhered to where possible. 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](#).

From 2 December, across all of England, the stay-at-home requirement will end. The new regulations set out the restrictions applicable in each tier. Full guidance is on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know> .

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

Boarding establishments may have low occupancy rates owing to cancelled holidays, however there remains a requirement to care for the pets of people hospitalised from coronavirus and for key workers, 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. The [business 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 an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

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 possible that some will be little used. Priority should be given to board dogs from households of key workers, or vulnerable people or from a coronavirus infected or isolating household. Dogs from infected or self-isolating households should not be mixed with others from non-infected households. The [business 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 by appointment. You should only have one person dropping off or collecting their dog at a time. The owner should retain all equipment such as leads. The home boarder must wash all equipment with soap and water once the dog/s have left. Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area such as a park or enclosed field.

COMMERCIAL DOG DAY CARE

Commercial day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers, 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, 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 an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed. The owner should retain 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. 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. 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. Handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible).



The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed. 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.

Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area such as a park or enclosed field.

DOG WALKERS

Dog walkers can continue to operate and priority should be given to key workers, 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 [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Handover should take place in an outdoor 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. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area. Any equipment, including the vehicle if used to transport the dog, must be cleaned and disinfected between dogs.

GROOMERS

An owner may take a pet 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 reception at a time. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed and should take place in a room or outdoor 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 separately from other dogs in different journeys and **after** pets from other non-infected households. Groomers should assess whether the grooming can be delayed until the household is clear to reduce the risk to themselves and their staff. Social distancing should be maintained at all times and the [business 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 (2m should be adhered to where possible). 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 [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed.

Mobile groomers may continue to operate providing that they can maintain social distancing. The [business 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

Although it is possible for potential owners to visit a litter to view a puppy or kitten with their mother it remains important to maintain hygiene and social distancing and to use electronic means of viewing if possible. It is not advised to visit a household that includes an infected person or one that is self-isolating and additional precautions should be taken if visiting a higher tier area. It is always best to clarify arrangements before visiting and there is [government guidance](#) that should be followed. Puppies and kittens that are ready to be rehomed should be delivered to their new owners by the breeder. Where this may not be possible and it is considered reasonably necessary for **welfare reasons**, they may be collected. In these circumstances the collection should be by appointment only and the handover must take place outside maintaining social distance and in compliance with other safety precautions. Whilst it is desirable to give an item of bedding with a kitten or puppy care must be taken to ensure there is no potential for transfer of virus.

Paperwork and other checks and documentation should be predominantly completed ahead of the meeting. Prior to the acquisition 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 if necessary because social distance cannot be maintained and whether the offspring will have sufficient socialisation in the current pandemic. They should also consider how the offspring can be safely handed over complying with the guidance above.



It may not be possible to vaccinate and microchip puppies or kittens during this time. 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 should 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. Where this may not be possible and it is considered reasonably necessary for welfare reasons, establishments may allow adopters to collect pets by appointment. In these circumstances the handover must take place outside, maintaining social distancing, and in compliance with other safety precautions. The CFSG [business handover protocol](#) should be used. 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](#). It may be necessary to admit pets from an infected or self-isolating household and additional precautions should be taken to protect staff.

Providing a suitable vehicle is available animals should 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 [business handover protocol](#) used to maintain social distancing. If the animal cannot be collected and it is considered reasonably necessary for welfare reasons, owners may still be permitted to visit a rescue by appointment for the purposes of relinquishing it.. 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

Selling pets already in stock or coming through the supply chain may continue providing adequate recommended social distance and health precautions can be maintained at all times (2m should be adhered to where possible). 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.

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 as advised by [government](#). 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 to provide the restraint. Adequate protection between the implanter and assistant should be provided if they are not from the same household. 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, 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

Training of dogs is an important element of their social development. Dog trainers may continue to provide advice on training 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 secure safe outside area to provide training, clients can meet the trainer there providing social distance can be maintained. There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times.

Tier 3: Indoor training classes are not allowed unless these form part of the core curriculum of formal education or professional/work-related training/development. This includes one-to-one training sessions. Outdoor training can go ahead providing social distance can be maintained and class sizes are limited to one-to-one (2m should be adhered to where possible). There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times.

Tier 2: If a trainer can utilise a safe outside area to provide training, clients can meet the trainer there providing social distance can be maintained and class sizes are limited to six people (2m should be adhered to where possible). There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times. Indoor training is allowed subject to social contact rules so must not go ahead where there is any mixing between social bubbles. The trainer would be working with one household/support bubble (which is realistically most likely to be one-to-one).

Tier 1: Where trainers normally use an indoor space for classes the trainer should undertake a risk assessment before re-starting classes. The assessment should include the ability to maintain a two metre social distance between a maximum of six clients. This may require the establishment of a one-way system during entry and exit to the room and limiting the number of clients in a class. The trainer must also ensure additional hygiene measures such as regular cleaning of items such as door handles and light switches are in place.

Owners of dogs from infected or self-isolating households pose a significantly higher risk to the trainer and should not be accepted. Owners can leave their dogs with a trainer providing the [business handover protocol](#) is followed and social distancing is maintained.

Behaviourists should wherever possible work remotely using technology. The behaviourist should make a professional judgement on a case by case basis as to whether it is justifiably necessary to work in a person's home and it should be very unusual to do so. Further [government advice](#) is available should it be necessary to work in a client's home.



PET SITTERS

Pet sitters 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 sit for an infected or self-isolating household.