

March 21, 2020

Governor Charlie Baker
24 Beacon Street
Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

EMAIL

Dear Governor Baker,

The Massachusetts Association of Veterinary Technicians is grateful for the extraordinary efforts of our state officials as they strive to keep Massachusetts residents safe and informed in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic.

The Massachusetts Veterinary Technician Association joins the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA), 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.”

Veterinary practices provide the following essential services:

1. Front line 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.
2. Veterinary teams 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. While primarily housed on farms, food animals are also present in urban areas.
3. Veterinary practices provide medical and surgical care daily for critically ill and injured animals.
4. Veterinary teams provide care for service and therapy animals, supporting both animal and human welfare.
5. Veterinary teams also oversee the care of laboratory animals, which are critical to research that leads to the development of pharmaceuticals and biologics, including vaccines such as those currently being developed to combat COVID-19.

6. Veterinary teams care for rare, threatened, and endangered animals in zoos, aquaria, wildlife rehabilitation clinics, and wildlife facilities. Even if such entities need to be closed to the public for COVID-19 mitigation, veterinarians and animal care staff must continue to care for these animals.
7. Veterinary teams are made up of trusted professionals involved in disaster situations. The training, education, and experience of veterinarians and their staff in disasters are transferable skills in whatever COVID-19 risk mitigation is deemed necessary.

For the reasons listed above, the MVTA urges Massachusetts officials to protect and preserve the public health and ensure that veterinary practice employees are clearly stated to be “essential businesses” and can continue to provide critical services in our communities.

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 MVTA echoes these statements and encourages Massachusetts to join other states and cities in classifying veterinary teams as essential personnel during this uniquely challenging time.

Sincerely,

Ed Carlson, CVT, VTS (Nutrition)
President
Massachusetts Veterinary Technician Association

cc: