

NAVTA Urges States to Deem Veterinary Personnel “Essential”

BRIDGEWATER, NJ - March 20, 2020 – Veterinary hospital personnel play critical roles in protecting the welfare of animals and must be designated “essential personnel” in every state, according to Ken Yagi, President of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), who spoke on behalf of the board.

Yagi, who is a Registered Veterinary Technician, said NAVTA strongly supports the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) in their recommendations that veterinary practices be considered “essential businesses” in cases where non-essential retail facilities are asked to close due to COVID-19. “Veterinary teams, which include veterinary technicians and veterinary assistants, provide essential animal care,” Yagi said, “We have to be able to get to work to protect the health of animals, whether they are pets, enter the food supply, are endangered, or serve laboratory purposes. Providing care for our animals helps our society through preventing zoonotic issues and promotes better emotional wellbeing for people.”

For those states where veterinary personnel are not designated as “essential,” NAVTA is urging the state veterinary technician associations to contact their legislators and Governors to encourage them to make a definitive declaration that they are essential. You can find your Governor’s contact information by clicking here: <https://www.usa.gov/state-governor>.

Risk mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 were 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.”

“These states and cities recognize that the services veterinary teams provide are critical to animal and public health,” Yagi said. “We urge all authorities to similarly designate veterinary practices as essential businesses.”

Veterinary practices provide the following essential services:

1. 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.
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. While perhaps different from a statutory and regulatory perspective, the training, education, and experience of veterinarians and our staff in disasters are clearly transferrable skills in whatever COVID-19 risk mitigation is deemed necessary.

For the reasons listed above, NAVTA urges lawmakers and state executives to protect and preserve public health and ensure that veterinary practice employees are clearly stated to be “essential businesses” and thereby allowed to continue to provide critical services in our communities.

“NAVTA is cognizant that some practices may need to close in order to protect the health and wellbeing of staff and community members,” Yagi said. “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.”

About NAVTA

Formed in 1981, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) advances and the world of veterinary nursing through continuing education, public and industry recognition, and advocacy. Learn more at www.navta.net.