

Guidelines for Farmers

March 26th 2020

Be aware!

As the Covid-19 situation unfolds, these guidelines may need to change.

We would like to reassure all farm clients that the veterinary profession is and will remain committed to providing our veterinary services at the highest standards possible and in line with government guidance. We aim to keep you as well-informed as possible and you may be assured that all vets are ready to update plans as changes to government guidance occur. As there may be sudden changes in practice team availability it may mean that practices will have to contact clients at short notice to change or postpone farm visits. The safety and well-being of our clients and staff are our priority – your patience and cooperation with the measures that we are introducing is appreciated

Your vet can still:

- Carry out all emergency work to ensure animal welfare and all **essential** work to maintain the food supply chain.
- Offer you professional advice and consultations by remote means, including prescribing medicines where appropriate.
- Carry out your TB test **as long as** both you and the vet are confident that it can be carried out in a safe manner, both from the point of animal handling and also the human health risk from Covid-19. If you have concerns about your TB test, discuss them with your vet by phone beforehand.

Your vet can no longer:

- Carry out any routine work that does not directly support the food supply chain. Discuss with your veterinary surgeon what is and what is not routine.

Before visiting your farm your vet will:

- a. Speak to you on the phone to check that a visit is essential. If remote means of diagnosis are feasible they may be employed instead, for example, the use of video/photos sent digitally.
- b. Ask you to confirm that all farm staff are healthy and not experiencing any of the recognised signs of Covid-19
- c. Ask whether there are vulnerable people on the farm, those at higher risk of Covid-19
- d. Ask if anyone on farm has recently come into contact with a person with symptoms of Covid-19

If the answer to any of questions b, c or d is yes, and if sufficient staff are available, the practice may send two staff members and ask that NO farm personnel be present for the visit. In this instance all communication will be done by telephone. The client **must** be available throughout the vet's visit to discuss treatment on the phone.

During the visit your vet:

- Will insist that social distancing is adhered to – currently 2 metres, a cow's length.
- Will require any farm staff to wear clean gloves if helping with handling or restraint.

- May need to consider alternative ways of treating the animal if social distancing cannot be maintained - **safeguarding human health must be the priority.**
- Will politely decline offers of hospitality or to enter the farmhouse. Such offers are always appreciated but in the current climate, must be declined.
- May wish to disinfect more than usual, not just protective clothing but also any areas of your property that he/she has touched.
- Will limit time on farm to the absolute minimum.

Dispensing

- Farmers should NOT visit any veterinary practice for any reason without prior arrangement. They should telephone first.
- Each practice will have a protocol for dispensing medicines which will ensure social distancing.
- Your vet may use a Drop Box or designated place outside of the practice building for medicines for collection. This is to minimise people coming into the practice. Please telephone on arrival and your medicines will be left out for you.
- Only one person may visit the premises. Children/other family members must not accompany the person collecting medicines.
- Following World Health Organisation guidelines, payment by card rather than cash/cheque will be requested.
- The supply of veterinary medicines is assured. There is no need to stockpile. Appropriate quantities will be dispensed.

If you have to bring an animal/samples to the practice:

- You must phone and speak to the vet on call before setting off for the practice.
- You must come alone. Children/other family members must not accompany you.
- You will be asked to confirm that you and all farm staff are healthy and not experiencing any of the recognised signs of Covid-19
- Your animal may be examined and treated in your vehicle or trailer. It may be admitted to the practice for treatment but you should NOT unload it without the express permission of practice staff. Social distancing will be maintained at all times. No internal access will be granted to the practice.
- You may need to disinfect yourself on arrival and before leaving the premises.
- You must observe strict social distancing and keep 2m from ALL members of staff at all times.

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