



COVID-19 GUIDANCE: Essential Businesses for Boarding Kennels, Doggie Daycares, Animal Shelters, Sanctuaries, and Rescues

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes the critical role boarding kennels, doggie daycares, shelters, sanctuaries, and rescues play in ensuring essential workers and at risk individuals have a safe place to house dogs and in protecting their currently housed dogs, staff and volunteers, and the community they serve, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PA Department of Agriculture has sourced the following guidelines for essential businesses to help ensure safe housing for their dogs during the COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

We encourage boarding kennels, doggie daycare, shelters, sanctuaries, and rescue facilities to continue operations but the decision for essential businesses to stay open or voluntarily close during the COVID-19 mitigation phase is a business-by-business decision. All essential businesses that choose to remain open should review and adjust standard operating procedures to minimize risk, take measures to protect their employees, send home sick employees, and minimize or eliminate congregate settings or groups of more than 10 people whenever possible. Shelters should prepare for COVID-19 like any other natural disaster during which intake is expected to increase.

Prepare workforce:

- Provide guidance for handwashing (like time intervals) and handling materials.
- Stagger lunch times or provide additional space to increase distancing of employees and volunteers.
- All sick employees and volunteers must stay at home.
- Inform employees and volunteers where they can find sanitizing materials.
- Encourage employees and volunteers to avoid large gatherings and practice social distancing during non-work hours.

Prepare workplace:

- Eliminate congregate settings and groups of more than ten people. This includes groups of employees, volunteers, and the public.

Sanitize contact surfaces:

- Disinfect all door handles, knobs and gates latches, floor mats, and other commonly contacted surfaces.
- Sanitize common gathering places – seating and arm rests, lobbies, meeting rooms, office spaces, grooming areas, lunch rooms, etc.

Only in cases where animals are being received from COVID-19 positive homes, staff should use PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), such as masks, gloves and gowns, to handle these animals upon intake. As a general best practice for receiving pets, pets should be bathed upon intake as long as medically and behaviorally possible. Baths should not include the use of a sprayer to prevent potential spray back onto staff. Once bathed the animal can be handled as normal. If an animal cannot be bathed due to either medical or behavioral challenges, the animal should be placed in a cage which does not require physical handling of the animal for a period of a week. The one week period for unbathed animals is being suggested out of an abundance of caution since the possibility exists for them to carry the virus on their fur. This risk is very low. If either due to caging systems, behavior or health of the animal, contact is required staff should wear PPE and avoid the animal having contact with his/her face. For any animals arriving in cages, the exterior of the cage should be cleaned upon intake in compliance with standard shelter cleaning protocols, be sure to at minimum wear gloves when cleaning such cages.

If PPE is not available, anyone handling animals should avoid contact with their faces and should wash hands regularly after handling each animal. Do not touch your face after or while handling any animal.

If your facility has excess PPE inventory, consider donating a portion to local human health medical facilities.

The Pennsylvania Animal Response Team is embedded with PEMA and coordinating statewide response for animal welfare. The team is available to assist in placement and temporary sheltering if a facility decides to close and with transport and pet food and resource requests if a facility decides to remain open.

The PA Department of Agriculture is recommending boarding kennels, doggie day cares, shelters, sanctuaries, and rescues follow the guidelines put forth in a *Shelter Kit for COVID-19* by the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement and The Humane Society of the United States.

This kit can be found at the following link: www.animalsheltering.org/COVID19 and contains:

- General information on COVID-19
- Sheltering preparedness and samples
 - Information to share with your community
 - General recommended practices for staff and volunteers
 - How to prepare at your shelter
 - Structuring a foster program
- Additional resources
- Contacts
- Sample documents from shelters
- Common questions and answers