Coping with COVID19 – vets thinking outside the square

Questions we flagged

i. Do you have any strategies to reduce risk of getting infected from clients that probably have a cold but might have something worse?

ii. Do you have ethanol hand gel in the waiting room?

iii. Are you discouraging nail clips and vaccinations?

iv. Staggering consults so there are less people in the waiting room?

v. Getting people to drop off cats with a history?

vi. Are you trying to put off elective things like cosmetic dentals?

vii. Or is it just business as usual?

Some responses from vets

Vet 1
Adapt, behave as in a surgical room, hands-off and plenty of soap everywhere!

Coronavirus are enveloped so that’s a good thing, not like a Parvo.

Vet 2
I only work in a small cat clinic, but we have started implementing some policies:—

- Clients must wash their hands in sink in waiting room upon entering/exiting
- Ideally ONE client per appointment
- Instituting a ‘drop and go’ policy where clients can leave their cat and we will take a history via the phone and perform whatever diagnostics or treatment required before they collect their cat later in the day to avoid sitting in a waiting room.
- For clients who are self-isolating, we are offering a collection service (i.e. put your cat in the box, put it outside the door—after we’ve acknowledged we are there and waiting)

- We are also cleaning door handles etc. on a regular schedule; I personally am cleaning the door handle in my consult room after every client

Vet 3
We are currently not reducing routines or discouraging ops—as we are a small clinic that does not have the resources to function that way for long.

Aside from the usual—reduce contact, disinfect, screen clients (on phone) before they come in, our workplace has set up two 'teams' of vets and nurses. One team works half the week the other team the other half.

The theory is that that way if someone on one team is infected and everyone on that team must self-isolate at least the other team can continue to function and avoid a total hospital closure.

Vet 4
- We have moved to 30-minute appointments to minimise interclient contact
- Disinfectant wipes in reception
- All clients apply hand gel as soon as enter the waiting room
- All surfaces clear in reception and wiped down every couple of hours, along with computers and phones and credit card machine
- Phone hand pieces cleaned before leaving the reception desk
- All seats and door handles wiped down after every consult period
- Consult rooms kept spotless, no clutter, everything wiped down, vets wear masks when near clients.

We are discouraging non-urgent stuff, but being pragmatic as this is likely to go on for months

Our elderly clients are most at risk so are putting in measures to ensure we can treat their animals with minimal risk to them—we are likely to be doing a lot of collections and drop offs
Vet 5

- Doing our first FaceTime video—consult shortly with client in the car, we take cat in, chat with them as we examine and deliver cat back to the car (just failed as the lady's mobile wouldn't work and we have had to take out a disinfected phone!)
- Food and drugs can be collected off the doorstep
- Video consults with cat at home—told there will be fee before doing so, waived if cat is seen for physical consult
- Can do same out of hours if needed
- Only one client in waiting room at once—wait in car till called in
- All door handles and handrails wiped with viricide after each client
- Rooms cleared of all clutter—books/magazines
- No hand shaking
- All clients to be mailed—snail, email, Facebook to outline our strategies

We will continue doing routine work—there is no end to this on the horizon and the business has to survive.

We are a strong business but if we do no routine work and there are no dentals and the like we might struggle to cover overheads with just emergency calls and very sick cats.

All businesses have a duty to staff as well as clients/patients and we would not want to be put in a position where we lay staff off so there must be a compromise.

As vets we have the fortune to have a clientele with needs that have to be met—I suspect the overall costs to business in general will be beyond belief, with so many bankruptcies and suicides—not wanting to be gloomy but the writing is on the wall.

What is the truth with hand sanitizers and facemasks bearing in mind we can’t get FFP3s for love or money?

Vet 6

This morning we moved to having a nurse restrain the pet in order that the client can stay back from the examination table. It takes some orchestration and saying the same thing repeatedly, but it worked much better than yesterday when a client inadvertently spat on me during conversation.

Our split shifts start next week. Two teams of three. One vet in each. Remains to be seen how this works. We will do Monday, Wednesday and Friday, alternating with Tuesday and Thursday only. Staff on in day do night shift also but get next day off.

Vet in Italy

We continue to work but ONLY for emergencies. The disinfectant products we have (until they end up on the market) are alcohol-based or based on alcohol neoxidine. We also have posters to display in the window. We all use gloves and masks for visits and, if possible, owners stay outside.

Recipe for hand sanitiser shared by a GP

Hand sanitiser is 60-70% alcohol, also called ethanol, which dehydrates and kills the virus.

Methylated spirits these days is actually 95% ethanol, so we can make hand sanitiser safely from this and use it in a spray bottle.

- Recipe: 75mL of methylated spirits, 24mL water, 1mL of ideally glycerine but if you don’t have any, 1mL of liquid dish soap will work too, just to help the spread over hands. It might not smell pretty, but it works (add 2 drops essential oil if you like)
- Mix the ingredients in a clean spray bottle, and make sure you are not spraying it in anyone’s eyes, face or near naked flames or lit cigarettes – it’s flammable! (Hint – quit smoking!)
- You should be using enough hand sanitiser of any type to wet your hands for about 20-30 seconds, about the time it takes to hum ‘happy birthday to you’ with 3 hip hoorays.
- The bonus is that this spray can also be used for cleaning hard surfaces like the kitchen bench.

Thanks to the IFSM listserv for sharing these great ideas