



COVID-19 – ADVICE FOR ANIMAL RELATED BUSINESSES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

Updated 24th December 2020

(This guidance is subject to change depending on Government advice)

Introduction

This guidance has been updated in the light of revised Government advice (24.12.20) on Coronavirus to balance public health protection requirements and the need for businesses to keep working. There remains no evidence that pets are implicated in the transmission of Coronavirus to people and infection of the pet is rare, but that there is some risk of virus potentially being carried from person to person on pets and their belongings although scientific assessment is now that such transmission is relatively unlikely. There have been some rare instances where infected owners have passed on infection to their pets but there remains no evidence of onward transmission and the main route of transmission remains person-to-person. However the risk of transmission between infected clients and business staff remains and the disease status of the client, if known, will assist in risk assessment.

The introduction of the Tier system means different rules apply in different areas. If you live in **Tier 4** you must not leave or be outside of your home or garden except where you have a 'reasonable excuse'. A reasonable excuse includes attending the care and exercise of an animal, or veterinary services. You can leave home for work purposes.

The status of a household is an important element of risk assessment. Clearly contact with an infected or self-isolating household carries a higher risk than with any other. The risk to the household of vulnerable people is greater and therefore requires more precautions. As there is some possibility of the pet carrying virus between households



it is appropriate to evaluate the risk in each circumstance to minimise the public health consequences. It is inevitable that the status of a household regarding coronavirus can change from one group to another and that the precautions suitable for the pet will change at the same time.

The simple precaution of washing hands for twenty seconds, or using hand sanitiser, as frequently as possible should now be intrinsic in every activity. Therefore, in this advice document it is assumed that hand sanitisation or washing, and social distancing, are included in all activities. [Guidance](#) on the wearing of face masks should also be consulted.

CFSG has produced a [handover protocol](#) between people walking friends' and neighbours' dogs. There is a separate [protocol](#) that should also be used when handing over dogs between a business and client.

Social distancing rules must be observed throughout every activity. While social distancing advice has been revised, 2m between individuals should be adhered to where possible. If at all possible, and if it is safe to do so, any handovers should be done outside. Risk assessments need to be undertaken to ensure the business is working in a safe way to protect members of staff and the public. The principles have been set out by government [here](#).

The government has introduced additional rules on the use of face coverings and full details of them and exemptions and other relevant information can be found [here](#). Apart from veterinary practices, animal activities are not specifically covered but for any activity indoors where business owners and staff interact with clients both must wear a face covering. Whilst this is not specifically mandatory for staff, it is advisable for their protection under Health and Safety legislation and does not alter the necessity for social distancing and the use of one way systems where appropriate. Where social distancing can be maintained outdoors the use of face coverings is not necessary although it is still advised. Hands should be washed or hand sanitiser used before putting a face covering on and after taking it off. Touching the eyes, nose, or mouth is to be avoided and used face coverings should be stored in a plastic bag until they can be washed or disposed of. Single use disposable masks should be disposed of appropriately after use. Re-useable masks should be washed and dried regularly.

According to the regulations, it is acceptable (amongst other reasons) for people to leave their homes if it is reasonably necessary for them to do so for the purpose of caring for or exercising their pet. Full guidance is on the [government website](#). A journey may therefore be reasonably necessary for these purposes, and journeys in the course of business are allowed.



In all circumstances where payment is included in a process the use of cash should be avoided. Where possible payment should be made using a credit or debit card or by electronic banking.

You should check that your insurance company is prepared to cover you for any activity undertaken during this period.

BOARDING ESTABLISHMENTS

Boarding establishments may have low occupancy rates owing to cancelled holidays, however there remains a requirement to care for the pets of people hospitalised from coronavirus and for key workers, and vulnerable people who may not be able to care for their pets. Boarding establishments may make arrangements with shelters and rescues if needed. Pets should only be admitted or sent home by appointment to ensure you only have a single client on the premises at any one time. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Any material such as collars, toys and food bowls arriving with an animal should be thoroughly washed with soap and water and left to dry in the open air. Handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

If an animal is taken from a Coronavirus infected household they should be held in the establishment's isolation facility for three days to ensure no virus is retained on the pet. During that period those pets should be dealt with **after** all others on the premises.

Animal rescue and re-homing organisations may also be under pressure from animals being abandoned and particularly if they have a stray dog contract with the local authority. Boarding establishments may also wish to offer space to them.

Clearly a proportion of any of those animals may not have up to date vaccinations. Veterinary practices may be able to offer vaccination if a disease and public health assessment by the vet shows it to be appropriate and social distancing can be maintained. The boarding establishment's veterinary practice should be contacted for advice regarding this. If, on assessment, the veterinary practice feels vaccination is appropriate, it may be that the risk of a visit by a vet and veterinary nurse is considered less of a public health risk than individual animals being taken to the owner's practice. It is important to increase biosecurity within the boarding establishment to reduce the likelihood of disease. This may be achieved by increased use of disinfectant, personal hygiene by the use of hand gel or hand washing between animals and by better separation of animals. Establishments should be able to provide an enhanced SOP for use in current circumstances to satisfy their local licensing authority.

HOME BOARDING



Similar to boarding establishments it is possible that some will be little used. Priority should be given to board dogs from households of key workers, or vulnerable people or from a coronavirus infected or isolating household. Dogs from infected or self-isolating households should not be mixed with others from non-infected households. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed.

All admission and return of dogs should be by appointment only to ensure clients are able to maintain social distance. The home boarder may collect the dog or the client may drop off and collect the dog by appointment. You should only have one person dropping off or collecting their dog at a time. The owner should retain all equipment such as leads. The home boarder must wash all equipment with soap and water once the dog/s have left. Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area such as a park or enclosed field.

COMMERCIAL DOG DAY CARE

Tier 4: The business may continue to collect dogs providing handover can take place in a COVID-secure manner and the vehicle is disinfected between journeys.

Tier 1 -3: Commercial day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers, and vulnerable people who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs may be collected from their home or owners may drop off and collect their dogs by appointment only, to ensure clients are able to maintain their social distance from others by only having one client on the premises at a time. If dogs are brought to site owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog with a similar procedure on return.

Handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed. The owner should retain all equipment such as leads.

If dogs are collected, only those from households that are not infected or self-isolating should be collected on each trip. If establishments wish to accept dogs from infected or self-isolating households they must be collected and returned separately. Such dogs should not be mixed with those from 'clear' households but may be kept in a completely separate group. The vehicle must be disinfected between journeys.

The entire premises must be cleaned and disinfected at the close of each day.

HOME DOG DAY CARE



Tier 4: The business may continue to collect dogs providing handover can take place in a COVID-secure manner and the vehicle is disinfected between journeys.

Tiers 1-3: Home day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs may be collected from their homes or owners may drop off and collect their dogs by appointment to ensure the maintenance of social distance between clients by only having one client on the premises at a time. Handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible).

The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed. The owner should retain all equipment such as leads.

Dogs from households that are infected or self-isolating should not be mixed with others from non-infected households.

Dogs should be walked on a lead locally, maintaining social distance from other people and pets. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area such as a park or enclosed field.

DOG WALKERS

Tier 4: When it is necessary for a dog walker to cross into or out of a Tier 4 area they may do so in the course of their business. Walkers should minimise such journeys to reduce the risk to public health. If you need to travel you should stay local - meaning avoiding travelling outside of your village, town or the part of a city where you live - and look to reduce the number of journeys you make overall.

Tiers 1-3: Dog walkers can continue to operate and priority should be given to key workers, and vulnerable people who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs from coronavirus infected or self-isolating households may be walked but if doing so they must be walked **after** dogs from all other households.

The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. Dogs from different households may be walked together as long as dogs from infected or self-isolating households are not mixed with others from non-infected households. Social distancing should be maintained for both the walker and the dogs by keeping the dogs on a lead at all times. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure safe area. Any equipment, including the vehicle if used to transport the dog, must be cleaned and disinfected between dogs.



GROOMERS

Tier 4: Groomers may accept a dog to be groomed by appointment for welfare but not aesthetic reasons. The necessity for an appointment is to ensure social distancing between clients. If dogs are brought to site owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed and should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

Groomers can collect dogs from client's homes as long as they can disinfect their vehicle between collections. Pets from infected or self-isolating households should be collected separately from other dogs in different journeys and **after** pets from other non-infected households. Groomers should assess whether the grooming can be delayed until the household is clear to reduce the risk to themselves and their staff. Social distancing should be maintained at all times and [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads.

Tiers 1-3: An owner may take a pet to be groomed by appointment if the grooming is necessary for welfare rather than aesthetic reasons. The necessity for an appointment is to ensure social distancing between clients. If dogs are brought to site owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed and should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance.

Groomers can collect dogs from client's homes as long as they can disinfect their vehicle between collections. Pets from infected or self-isolating households should be collected separately from other dogs in different journeys and **after** pets from other non-infected households. Groomers should assess whether the grooming can be delayed until the household is clear to reduce the risk to themselves and their staff. Social distancing should be maintained at all times and the [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads.

Multiple dogs may be taken in at a time where a grooming salon has sufficient space to separate them and for groomers to maintain social distancing whilst working (2m should be adhered to where possible). Admission and return of dogs must be by appointment only to ensure social distancing where the reception area is large enough to do so. Where clients bring their dogs to the salon when possible they should wait in the car until the salon is ready to accept the dog. The reverse procedure should be used for return. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed.

Mobile groomers may continue to operate providing that they can maintain social distancing. The [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. The grooming facility must be thoroughly disinfected between pets. Home groomers may operate providing they can maintain



social distancing rules and following the [Government guidance](#) on those working in other people's homes. They should not visit an infected or self-isolating household. All equipment must be disinfected between each home.

DOG AND CAT BREEDERS

Tier 4: Purchasers living in Tier 4 areas are unable to travel to collect a puppy or kitten but the breeder may provide a delivery service across a Tier 4 boundary. When it is necessary for welfare reasons for the pet to be moved to their new home a breeder may take a puppy or kitten to the purchaser by appointment providing the handover can be performed using the [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG. When a pet is delivered handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the breeder/transporter and purchaser to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). Whilst it is desirable to give an item of bedding with a kitten or puppy care must be taken to ensure there is no potential for transfer of virus. A puppy or kitten should not be taken to an infected or self-isolating household.

Tiers 1-3: In view of the coronavirus restrictions potential owners may be unable to visit a litter in person to view a puppy or kitten with their mother in its home environment and so some virtual means of allowing potential purchasers to view is necessary. Puppies and kittens ready for sale in November should already have been viewed prior to the new restrictions. Puppies and kittens that are ready to be rehomed should be delivered to their new owners by the breeder. Where this may not be possible and it is considered reasonably necessary for **welfare reasons**, they may be collected. In these circumstances the collection should be by appointment only and the handover must take place outside maintaining social distance and in compliance with other safety precautions. other .

When a pet is delivered handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the breeder/transporter and purchaser to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). Whilst it is desirable to give an item of bedding with a kitten or puppy care must be taken to ensure there is no potential for transfer of virus.

Paperwork and other checks and documentation should be predominantly completed ahead of the meeting. Prior to the acquisition of the puppy or kitten, the purchaser should be given advice on immediate care of them including what food to purchase and allowing them to settle in their new home.

Breeders who are considering mating a bitch or queen should ensure that they have the facility to be able to allow potential purchasers to view the litter remotely if necessary because social distance cannot be maintained and whether the offspring will have sufficient socialisation in the current pandemic. They should also consider how the offspring can be safely handed over complying with the guidance above.



It may not be possible to vaccinate and microchip puppies or kittens during this time. Breeders and purchasers should contact their veterinary practice by telephone first for advice. Where there is a high risk of infection with severe disease such as Canine Parvovirus the practice may be able to provide suitable arrangements for vaccination if a disease and public health assessment by the vet shows it to be appropriate and social distancing can be maintained. The breeder's veterinary practice should be contacted for advice prior to sale. If, on assessment, the veterinary practice feels vaccination is appropriate, it may be that the risk of a visit by a vet and veterinary nurse is considered less of a public health risk than individual animals being taken to each purchaser's practice. If vaccination is undertaken the pet should be microchipped at the same time if not already implanted.

PET RE-HOMING AND RESCUE ORGANISATIONS

Tier 4: Adopters living in Tier 4 areas are unable to travel to collect a pet but the rescue may provide a delivery service across a Tier 4 boundary. When it is necessary for welfare reasons for the pet to be moved to their new home the organisation may take a puppy or kitten to the adopter by appointment providing the handover can be performed using the [business handover protocol](#) set out by CFSG. When a pet is delivered handover should take place in an outdoor space large enough for the rescue staff and adopter to maintain their social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). Whilst it is desirable to give an item of bedding with a pet care must be taken to ensure there is no potential for transfer of virus. A pet should not be taken to an infected or self-isolating household.

Animals should not be moved into or out of a Tier 4 area except for welfare reasons that cannot be controlled by any other means. When it is necessary for an animal to be moved across a Tier 4 boundary the animal should be securely caged and be put into or taken out of the vehicle by local staff. The vehicle driver should remain in the vehicle at all times during the journey.

Re-homing organisations should accept relinquished animals from within the Tier 4 area. Where possible the animals should be collected by appointment and handed over using the [business handover protocol](#).

Tiers 1-3: Animal rescue and rehoming establishments should continue to rehome pets by offering to transport them to the home of adopters providing that a suitable vehicle is available that can be disinfected between each journey. Where this may not be possible and it is considered reasonably necessary for welfare reasons, establishments may allow adopters to collect pets by appointment. In these circumstances the handover must take place outside, maintaining social distancing, and in compliance with other safety precautions. The CFSG [business handover protocol](#) should be used. Animals should not be rehomed to coronavirus infected or self-isolating households or those where



someone in the household has symptoms of coronavirus. Further detail is available [here](#). It may be necessary to admit pets from an infected or self-isolating household and additional precautions should be taken to protect staff.

Providing a suitable vehicle is available animals should be collected by arrangement from households that are unable to provide adequate care for the animals. Staff should be provided with suitable protective equipment and the CFSG [business handover protocol](#) used to maintain social distancing. If the animal cannot be collected and it is considered reasonably necessary for welfare reasons, owners may still be permitted to visit a rescue by appointment for the purposes of relinquishing it.. The animal should be placed in the isolation facility and dealt with **after** all other animals on site. Further detail is available [here](#).

PET SHOPS AND OTHER BREEDERS

Selling pets already in stock or coming through the supply chain may continue providing adequate recommended social distance and health precautions can be maintained at all times (2m should be adhered to where possible). A decision to sell small pets should be made on an individual basis having made a risk assessment of the pet shop's ability to carry out the function in accordance with government's Coronavirus safety guidelines and subject to the ability of staff on duty to provide informed care advice about the particular species being sold. Pet shops can also consider arrangements for home delivery of items.

Consideration must be given by breeders as to how the welfare of existing juvenile stock can be maintained whilst the coronavirus measures are in place and where necessary advice should be obtained on how best to maintain the health and welfare of the animals. This can be obtained from their breeder's veterinary surgeon or in the case of a licensed premises such as a pet shop, the veterinary surgeon assigned to the premises under the Licensing of Animal Activities Regulations.

PET MICROCHIP IMPLANTERS

This guidance is for businesses that provide a microchip implant service. Veterinary practices that implant should follow guidance from the RCVS. Implantation whilst having a pet vaccinated by a vet is the most appropriate solution to comply with compulsory microchip legislation that requires dogs to be microchipped by the age of eight weeks and before change of ownership and for cats. Businesses that provide a microchip implant service may continue to operate providing that they can do so whilst protecting public health by maintaining social distancing and hygiene requirements as advised by [government](#). Implanters should not microchip a puppy or kitten in a household which has someone infected with coronavirus or who is self-isolating because of the virus.



Tier 4: Microchip implanters may operate in a Tier 4 area providing they do so in a COVID-secure manner. Advice on working in other people’s homes is on the [government website](#).

Tiers 1-3: Microchipping cannot be achieved safely whilst maintaining social distance as puppies and kittens need to be restrained whilst being implanted so the implanter must take with them an appropriately trained second person to provide the restraint. Adequate protection between the implanter and assistant should be provided if they are not from the same household. The litter should be separated from the bitch or queen by the owner and left in a safe and secure area where the implanter can reach them with minimal access to the premises. Once the litter has been implanted all necessary paperwork should be completed online after the implanter has returned home and no paperwork left at the premises except in exceptional circumstances.

After the implanter and assistant return they should thoroughly wash with soap and water and leave to dry any equipment used that cannot be disposed of responsibly. Nothing should be left at the owner’s premises.

DOG TRAINERS

Tier 4: Only one-to-one training outdoors is allowed with no indoor training. Social distance should be maintained and class sizes are limited to one-to-one (person or household bubble) to maintain social distance so there is no mixing between household bubbles (2m should be adhered to where possible). There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times.

Tier 3: Indoor group training classes are not allowed, but one-to-one (the client may be a person or single household/support bubble) training sessions may continue in a COVID-secure venue (e.g. a sports hall or village hall) subject to a risk assessment to ensure social distance is maintained. Outdoor training can go ahead providing social distance can be maintained and class sizes are limited to one-to-one (person or household bubble) to maintain social distance so there is no mixing between household bubbles (2m should be adhered to where possible). There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times.

Tier 2: Indoor training is allowed in a COVID-secure venue and an appropriate risk assessment has been made. It remains subject to social contact rules so must not go ahead where there is any mixing between social bubbles. The trainer would be working with one household/support bubble (which is realistically most likely to be one-to-one).



If a trainer can utilise a safe outside area to provide training, clients can meet the trainer there providing social distance can be maintained and class sizes are limited to six people or household bubbles to maintain social distance (2m should be adhered to where possible). There should be no physical contact between the trainer and client or dog and social distance should be maintained at all times.

Tier 1: All training may continue. Where trainers normally use an indoor space for classes the trainer should undertake a risk assessment before re-starting classes. The assessment should include the ability to maintain a two metre social distance between a maximum of six clients and to ensure no mixing. This may require the establishment of a one-way system during entry and exit to the room and limiting the number of clients in a class. The trainer must also ensure additional hygiene measures such as regular cleaning of items such as door handles and light switches are in place.

Owners of dogs from infected or self-isolating households pose a significantly higher risk to the trainer and should not be accepted. Owners can leave their dogs with a trainer providing the [business handover protocol](#) is followed and social distancing is maintained.

Behaviourists should wherever possible work remotely using technology. The behaviourist should make a professional judgement on a case by case basis as to whether it is justifiably necessary to work in a person's home and it should be very unusual to do so. Further [government advice](#) is available should it be necessary to work in a client's home.

PET SITTERS

Pet sitters may operate in any tier area providing they can maintain social distancing rules and following the [Government guidance](#) on those working in other people's homes. They should not sit for an infected or self-isolating household.