

Guidance for Animal Handovers in Wales during Covid-19 restrictions

As restrictions¹ implemented by the Welsh Government in response to Covid-19 will continue as of Monday 28 December, it is expected that any animal-related business that chooses to remain open, or re-opens, implements a robust regime of risk assessments; biosecurity protocols; and social distancing measures. All non-essential travel, indoor and outdoor activities and public visitations should be postponed until further notice. Travel outside of Wales is not permitted unless for essential reasons, for example where animal welfare is likely to be significantly impacted - or for essential work reasons. Charity shops and other non-essential retail must also close during this period.

Animal rehoming can take place virtually, but only within Wales and as locally as is possible. Please ensure that when rehoming, a 2-metre distance is kept at all times, and rehome outdoors where possible.

The measures set out below should be considered, and applied where necessary, by each animal-related business during every handover, and be used to inform your business's risk assessment with regard to each type of individual and household you encounter during your work. You should ascertain the health status of each household before agreeing to care for the pet and act in accordance with the most appropriate guidance as detailed below.

When caring for a pet where the status of the household is reported to be healthy:

- Only receive and return animals from addresses within Wales. Travel outside of Wales is not permitted, unless for essential reasons, for example where animal welfare is likely to be significantly impacted - or for essential work reasons.
- Agree times or book appointments with clients to ensure that you only deal with one customer at a time at your premises.
- Determine a way to hand over the pet in a manner which maintains a two metre distance and if possible do this in an outside secure area.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds using soap and water or use hand sanitiser before going to collect the pet or before they are dropped off to you.
- Have access to, and use, different equipment to the owner's where possible. If you have to use the owner's equipment, such as a lead or carrier, you should wear gloves and wipe the equipment before taking the animal. The equipment should be washed with soap and water once away from the animal and safe to do so. The reverse should be done when returning the animal.
- If safe to do so, the handover should take place outdoors and dogs should be securely tied to a fixed object, such as a hook, whilst the owner retreats two metres after which you should move forward to attach your lead and take the dog. Once you have moved back, the owner then retrieves their lead. The reverse procedure is used to return the dog.
- If handover occurs within the premises, face masks should be worn by you and the owner at the point of transfer and if entering someone else's home, you should ask them to open and close the doors for you.
- To collect cats, the owner should put the cat into their own carrier before the handover and the cleaning process described above should then be followed for the carrier.
- Avoid handling anything else, such as your phone and your face, during any time of the handover process.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser once you have returned the pet.
- If you are transporting pets, disinfect any surfaces that the pet(s) has come into contact within your vehicle with a pet-safe disinfectant spray and/or wipe surfaces, before transporting other pets.

In addition, and when caring for a pet from someone who has, or is suspected of having, Coronavirus:

- If taking animals from an infected or vulnerable household, do not mix them with animals from other households including during transportation.
- Avoid all physical contact with the householders ensuring strict processes are in place in order to maintain the two metres distance at all times. You should avoid entering the home.
- If walking a dog for an owner, keep them on a lead in spaces where there are other people and dogs to avoid them touching in case the virus is transferred on their fur (this is in addition to normal practice where dogs should be kept on leads in places where there is livestock or wildlife).

¹ <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>