

Guidance for animal-related businesses in Wales during Covid-19 restrictions

The information within this Guidance is subject to change depending on Welsh Government advice. It is therefore essential all animal related businesses in Wales cross-check and adhere to all Welsh Government [Covid-19 restrictions](#)¹. It is also important that businesses understand their customers/clients remain subject to travel and other Covid-19 restrictions.

This document provides Guidance in line with the restrictions introduced across the whole of Wales, as of Monday 22 March 2021.

Animal rehoming can now take place by appointment, but only within Wales and as locally as is possible to prevent long journey times. Please ensure that when rehoming, a 2-metre distance is kept at all times, and rehome outdoors where possible. Further information regarding animal handovers can be found in the 'Animal Handover' guidance document.

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. From 12 April - travel between Wales and England will again be permitted for non-essential reasons.

From Monday April 12 Charity shops and other non-essential retail may also re-open in Wales.

From 22 April, indoor training classes from 15 people and outdoor classes for 30 people can resume - pending Government approval.

The information provided is intended to strike the right balance between the need to protect public health and the need for businesses to operate. All businesses should remain up to date with the guidance on what travel is [permitted](#)².

It is important to note that there is no known scientific evidence to suggest that companion animals play a part in the transmission of Covid-19 to humans and it is highly unlikely that a pet would become infected either, however there may be some risk of the virus being carried by pets and their belongings. Anyone operating an animal related business certainly remains at risk of the virus being transmitted by clients, however, and this should be incorporated into all risk assessments.

The status of a client and/or household is a fundamental element of risk assessment because contact with an infected or self-isolating household brings with it a higher risk than with any other. The risk to the household of shielding or vulnerable people is greater and therefore requires additional precautions. Because there remains some possibility of the animal carrying the virus between households, or business premises to home (etc.), it is appropriate to consider the risk at each contact point in order to minimise the potential for public health consequences.

The practice of thoroughly washing hands for twenty seconds as frequently as possible should now be a routine activity for everyone. Within this Guidance document it has been assumed that hand washing and all social distancing measures - including maintaining a 2m distance between colleagues/clients in the workplace - are intrinsic in all activities.

In addition to this guidance there is also an Animal Handover Guidance document for businesses, which may further assist the development of processes to minimise risk when animals are taken from and returned to a client.

Please note that the following guidance is predominantly based upon the documentation originally produced by the Canine & Feline Sector Group for Defra in England, and subsequently amended in recognition of policy and law in Wales

Social distancing rules must be observed throughout every activity and the 2 metre rule is between all individuals who do not live in the same home. Any handovers should be done outside. Risk assessments are a fundamental tool in assisting each business with the processes needed to ensure it is working as safely as possible, protecting its staff and the public. More information is available from the [Welsh Government](#)³.

In all circumstances where payment is to be made for business services (or reimbursement), the use of cash should be completely avoided. Where possible payment should be made using a credit or debit card or by bank transfer.

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

Animal Exhibits

Whilst not one of the businesses specifically listed by the Welsh Government as having to close, many Animal Exhibits operate in front of a live audience and/or with close contact between the animals, their handlers and the public, and it is therefore anticipated such activities could not operate under conditions that meet the requirements of the Welsh Government's Covid-19 restrictions.

Boarding

COMMERCIAL (LARGER SCALE) BOARDING ESTABLISHMENTS

Most boarding establishments will have very low occupancy rates owing to cancelled holidays, however there is a significant requirement to care for the pets of people hospitalised from coronavirus and for key workers, shielded and vulnerable people who may not be able to care for their pets.

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 **and these should only take place within Wales**. Animals being collected or taken by their owner to the boarding establishment could be carrying the virus on their coat, or on belongings such as leads. The Animal Handover Guidance 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 a room or space large enough for the client and staff to maintain their social distance. If an animal is taken from a known 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 these animals should be dealt with **after** all others on the premises in order to minimise risk. The area where the animal from a Covid-19 positive home has been kept should be thoroughly disinfected after their departure.

Boarding establishments may make arrangements with shelters and rescues if needed. 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 or establishment'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; hand washing between animals; and by better separation of animals. Establishments should be able to provide an enhanced Standard Operating Procedures for use in current circumstances to satisfy their local licensing authority.

³ www.gov.wales/staying-home-and-away-others-guidance

HOME BOARDING

Similar to boarding establishments (above) it is likely that many will close or conduct very little business. Priority should be given to board dogs from households of key workers, or vulnerable people or a coronavirus infected or isolating household. Dogs from infected or self-isolating households must never be mixed with others from known non-infected households. The Animal Handover Guidance 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 if the client can meet the Covid-19 travel restrictions **which only permits travel within Wales**. 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.

Breeding Establishments

DOG AND CAT BREEDERS

Although it is anticipated that breeders will have adjusted their business practices in light of Covid-19 restrictions there may be existing litters of puppies and kittens ready for their new homes. In order to comply with restrictions governing businesses these young animals can be delivered by prior arrangement to the purchaser. Any journeys over 40 miles for commercial purposes such as these will be subject to the [Welfare of Animals Transport Order⁴](#) and transporter authorisation must be sought. Under the new Welsh Government Regulations, only travel within Wales is permitted and this applies to the transport of animals to their new homes. The animal must be at least eight weeks of age and any viewing of them with the bitch or queen, and litter mates, can be achieved remotely. Handover should take place in an outdoor space and social distance maintained. No equipment such as a basket should be given by the breeder to the purchaser.

Paperwork, payment and other checks and documentation should be completed ahead of the meeting. Prior to the puppy or kitten being handed over, the purchaser should be given advice on immediate care of them including what food to purchase and how to enable 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 and whether the offspring will have sufficient socialisation in the current pandemic. They should also consider how the offspring can be safely delivered complying with all restrictions and relevant welfare legislation.

As it may not be possible to vaccinate and microchip puppies or kittens in the current lockdown, 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.

BREEDERS OF SMALL ANIMALS

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.

⁴ See www.gov.wales/welfare-animals-during-transport

Dog Day Care - both home and larger/commercial premises

Commercial day care may continue to operate and priority should be given for key workers, and shielded and vulnerable people who are unable to make alternative safe arrangements for their dog. Dogs may be collected from outside their home⁶ or they may drop off and collect their dogs by appointment only, if travelling within Wales, to ensure clients are able to maintain their social distance from others by only having one client on the premises/at the home at a time. If dogs are brought to site/the home, owners should remain in their vehicles until staff are ready to accept their dog with a similar procedure on return. Handovers should take place outdoors to maintain their social distance. The Animal Handover Guidance should be followed.

If dogs are collected from the owner, 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 must never be mixed with those from 'clear' households but may be kept in a completely separate group and the vehicle must be disinfected between journeys. The entire premises (or home area where the dogs have access) must be cleaned and disinfected at the close of each day. Dog walking should originate and finish at home. Dogs should be kept on a lead in spaces where there are other people and dogs to maintain social distance rules (see later section).

Dog Walkers

Dog walkers can continue to operate and priority should be given to key workers, and shielding 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 Animal Handover Guidance should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. Handover should take place outside, or in a 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 where there are other dogs or people. Dogs may be allowed off lead in a secure private area, but should be kept on the lead when walking on rights of way or near livestock. Any equipment, including the vehicle if used to transport the dogs (and meeting Covid-19 travel restrictions), must be cleaned and disinfected between groups of dogs.

Dog trainers

Dog training classes, both indoors and outdoors, are not permitted to take place under the current restrictions - as they require people to gather and would be unable to maintain the required social distancing. However training of dogs is an important element of their social development.

From **22 April**, training classes - 30 people outdoors and 15 people indoors - will be able to resume, pending approval from Welsh Government.

Dog trainers may continue to provide advice on training on a one-to-one basis using technology to connect the trainer and client. It may also be possible to run classes by video link. Trainers could collect dogs for training sessions providing the [Animal Handover Guidance](#) is followed and social distancing is maintained.

Equines - riding and training establishments, plus farriers

Individual riding is a permitted form of exercise providing all social distancing and biosecurity measures are strictly followed. Under Alert Level 4, only individual exercise is permitted, and this should be considered at all times.

From **22 April**, training classes - 30 people outdoors and 15 people indoors - will be able to resume, pending approval from Welsh Government.

Training establishments are unable to operate under the current guidance. Trainers may continue to provide advice on training on a one-to-one basis using technology to connect the trainer and client. It may also be possible to run classes by video link.

Farriers are permitted to work, as maintaining good foot health is an important part of providing for the animal's welfare. Again all social distancing measures should be observed.

Groomers

Although pet groomers are not required to close, consideration should be given by the groomer and the clients as to whether the welfare of the animal is compromised should grooming not occur in the near future. If it is not immediately necessary then the risk of human contact and journeys to/from the premises can be better delayed to protect public health. In many cases, groomers may instead consider maintaining contact with clients remotely and offering advice to them about their pet's coat.

Where grooming is considered essential to support the animal's welfare needs - other than for key workers and those with a disability - owners can drive to the premises as long as they are travelling within Wales. All grooming should be made by appointment only. The necessity for an appointment is to ensure social distancing between clients. If dogs are brought to the premises, owners should remain outside until staff are ready to accept their dog. You should only have one person in reception at a time. The handover should take place outside or in a space large enough for the client and staff to maintain social distancing requirements and the Animal Handover Guidance should be followed.

Groomers can collect dogs from client's homes, within Wales, as long as they can disinfect their vehicle between collections (and any commercial journey meets the requirements of the [Welfare of Animals in Transport⁵](#)). 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.

On seeing the dog for themselves groomers should again assess whether the grooming can be delayed until the household is clear to reduce the risk to themselves and their staff. A client may walk their dog to be groomed by appointment. Once the dog has been groomed either the dog may be walked home or the groomer may return the dog. Social distancing should be maintained at all times and the Animal Handover Guidance should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads.

Multiple dogs may be taken in at a time where a grooming premises has sufficient space to separate them and for groomers to maintain social distancing whilst working but the appointments for when clients arrive and depart should be staggered to minimise the risk of them coming into contact with other clients and their dogs. 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 premises when possible they should wait in the car until someone is ready to accept the dog. The reverse procedure should be used for return, again utilising the Animal Handover Guidance.

Mobile groomers - those with vehicles equipped to carry out the grooming outside of the animal's home - may continue to operate providing that they can maintain social distancing. Travel outside of Wales is not permitted, except in circumstances whereby there is a potentially significant impact on animal welfare and groomers should take all

⁵ www.gov.wales/welfare-animals-during-transport

considerations before travelling outside of Wales. The Animal Handover Guidance should be followed with the owner retaining all equipment such as leads. The grooming facility must be thoroughly disinfected between pets.

Microchip implanters for cats and dogs

The following section advises 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. 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.

Breeders/owners should establish whether microchip implanters are prepared to carry out microchipping during the coronavirus restrictions. Whilst it is not advised that the public should make a specific journey to get a puppy microchipped, an implanter could visit to implant by appointment. 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.

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 from their household to provide the restraint. 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. After the implanter and assistant return to their household 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.

Pet shops

Pet shops can, again, continue to provide pet food and other supplies. Selling pets already in stock or coming through the supply chain may continue under that provision providing adequate recommended social distance and health precautions can be maintained at all times.

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 Welsh Government's Coronavirus restrictions 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 as long as they are only travelling within Wales. At point of sale the pet should be placed in a secure container that has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Sources⁶ of further information:

- ⇒ Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW) www.awnwales.org
- ⇒ British Small Veterinary Association (BSAVA) www.bsava.com
- ⇒ British Veterinary Association (BVA Wales) www.bva.co.uk/about-us/our-structure/welsh-branch
- ⇒ National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC) www.newc.co.uk
- ⇒ Welsh Government www.gov.wales/coronavirus

The Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW) thanks the Canine and Feline Sector Group for their kind permission to reproduce within this Guidance much of the content from the documentation they produced for Defra in England.

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh. E-bost/Email: contact@awnwales.org

⁶ Please ensure all advice you seek from any of the organisations listed below is fully compliant with the restrictions in place in Wales (some sources may only be checking against restrictions that are applicable to England only)