

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114  
617-626-1700 fax: 617-626-1850 www.mass.gov/agr



CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lt. Governor

KATHLEEN A. THEOHARIDES  
Secretary

JOHN LEBEAUX  
Commissioner

**BULLETIN 2020-03**

To: Massachusetts Animal Control Officers (ACOs) and Animal Inspectors

From: Dr. Lorraine O'Connor, State Veterinarian

Date: March 19, 2020

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Guidance for Animal Control Officers and Animal Inspectors

---

Animal Control Officers and Animal Inspectors:

In the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic and the reasonable recommendations made for "social distancing" the professionals in the animal health, welfare and public safety arenas will need to continue to perform their duties. With that being said, we need to be safe, thoughtful, and diligent in our practices to protect ourselves, the public that we interact with and the animals that we are dedicated to protecting.

Quarantines will need to be issued and released but that can be done by taping the order on the door and observing the animal from a doorway or window. Conversations with owners about leash laws, licensing issues, barking dogs, and other nuisance complaints can be handled by phone. Many cities and towns now offer on-line licensing that you can encourage residents to utilize.

Loose, stray and injured animals should be handled as potential public safety issues. You can capture the animal and limit your exposure to people. Carry extra slip leads if they are available and if it is an owned dog, you can hand the dog with the slip lead off to the owner while keeping a three to four foot distance between you. Please check in with your local veterinarians about services being offered during this challenging time. Determine which animal hospital is available at specific times for the emergency calls and if any are willing to do necessary rabies vaccinations. Make sure that you have a safe holding facility for those animals whose owners are unknown and for those that cannot be immediately returned to their owners. Do your best to limit the animals in your care.

During this time, many people will be working from home where they will likely have increased interactions with their pets. Hopefully, this leads to good outcomes and limited need for our intervention. However, the stress of the current situation may lead to unintended consequences. In some communities, the local dog parks may be the only place to exercise your pet. Observe and be prepared to limit the numbers of people and animals at a given time to protect everyone.

Disease outbreaks, neglect and cruelty cases will need to be investigated. Much of the investigation can be done remotely and if on site investigation is needed, be careful to maintain the recommended three to six feet of personal space. Use your years of experience in biosecurity practices to lead by example. Courtesy and professionalism will be sorely needed during these uncertain times.

If you have any questions about this Bulletin, please contact Dr. Lorraine O'Connor, State Veterinarian, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, at 617-626-1791 or L.OConnor@mass.gov.