

CORONAVIRUS

Ensuring animal welfare during Covid-19 pandemic

THE RCVS is providing useful advice for veterinary practitioners in the current coronavirus pandemic.

However, I feel strongly that we, as veterinary professionals, must recognise the threats to animal welfare that would arise from animal owners being required to self isolate or be in quarantine.

It is reassuring that at present 'social distancing' allows dog walking and horse riding. It is essential that 'tending to animals' should be recognised and clearly stated to be a valid reason for leaving one's home.

I was alarmed and disappointed that 'animal welfare' was not mentioned in media coverage of lockdown in other countries, while 'obtaining food, medicines and some work activities' were recognised as valid reasons for going out.

'Tending to animals' could include a wide range of activities – not only exercising dogs and horses but feeding and checking other species housed outdoors and possibly not on one's own premises. Owners should also be persuaded to make plans for their animals to be cared for by someone else should they become infected with Covid-19. We must hope that this will apply to only a small number of people.

World Horse Welfare has provided excellent advice online for horse owners on horse care and Covid-19 (<https://bit.ly/2J6aaw0>).

There are, on the other hand, some benefits currently being experienced by companion animals. Some dogs in particular are enjoying having their owners in the home more, giving them more company, exercise and attention. Dog behaviour and human mental health should benefit.

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