



Dear Clients,

The last few months have brought changes we could have never imagined. We appreciate your patience as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19. Unfortunately, it does not look like the threat of COVID-19 is going away anytime soon so I thought I would share what we are doing in response and why.

First off, I need to emphasize that our decisions and focus are primarily based on keeping our employees and their families safe while helping as many patients as possible. We are doing everything we can to ensure that we can remain open and available.

Our protocols and policies are based on parameters set forth by WorkSafe BC. In addition, recommendations from other leading veterinary organizations and specialists have been taken into consideration, most notably the CVMA and Dr. Scott Weese (infectious disease specialist, Ontario Veterinary College's Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses). We know that the risk of viral transmission is greatest in closed spaces, crowded situations, and close contact settings, all of which are common in the veterinary hospital.

The key points of our response are:

- All staff are self-monitoring and if deemed necessary are being tested and/or quarantined at home.
- Within the clinic, everyone is wearing masks along with increased cleaning and sanitization protocols.
- Due to the large number of staff and doctors in the building at any one given time, employees are assigned to teams and spread out through the hospital to increase physical distancing.
- Only staff and patients are entering the building at this time with the exception being extenuating circumstances (such as euthanasia) solely at management's discretion.
- Minimizing contact time between staff and clients through the use of online forms, contactless payment, and our online store with home delivery.
- We have also implemented the option of telemedicine.

Why are we not allowing clients in the building when other clinics may be?  
In order to prevent COVID-19 transmission within our hospital, we need to restrict access as much as possible, control the movement of people through the hospital, prevent close contact in small rooms and institute appropriate cleaning protocols. Seemingly simple things, like one-way flow and physical distancing, are just not possible if we open up the clinic. Our hospital is much bigger than many other clinics with a large number of doctors and support staff in the building at any one time; considering the space we have to work in, and sanitization required, it would be impossible to adhere to all of the WorkSafe BC guidelines, putting people at risk of exposure.

In addition, the changes we have already instituted have necessitated extending the normal length of our appointment times. This has resulted in fewer available appointment slots in a day. If clients were to enter the building, for us to adequately clean between appointments, we would have to lengthen appointment times further. This would drastically reduce the availability to pets in urgent need of care. We miss the personal interaction with our clients and are working on ways to improve the communication during appointments. We hope to welcome everyone back more sooner than later but, in the meantime, it is our promise that all pets that enter our hospital are still getting the exemplary care you have come to know. In fact, I think they are getting even more spoiled during the time they spend with our support staff. It can't be understated the value of a snuggle with a puppy or kitten during these stressful times. Thank you for continuing to entrust us with the care of your family.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Paula Bedford  
Owner/Veterinarian  
Maple Ridge Veterinary Hospital

For further information, Dr. Weese's blog (Worms and Germs) is a good source of practical information. Here is his most recent COVID blog.

<https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/2020/08/articles/miscellaneous/veterinary-clinic-access-and-covid-19-risks/>