



COMMUNICATION TO OUR MEMBERS

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EMERGENCY MEASURES CONCERNING COVID-19

The Boards of Directors of L'Association vétérinaire québécoise de médecine de refuge (AVQMR) and the Ontario Shelter Medicine Association (OSMA) support the measures proposed by the US National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) to limit and prioritize services offered by shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to to serve both short and long term public health interests.

The proposed measures can be viewed below:

- Animal control functions: <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NACA-Statement-on-Animal-Control-Functions.pdf>
- Cat intake : <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Cat-Intake-Protocols-Statement.pdf>
- Releasing unaltered pets : <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Releasing-Unaltered-Pets-from-Animal-Shelters-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>
- Continuity of services : <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NACA-statement-Continuity-of-Services.pdf>

Among these measures are notably included:

- **Temporarily discontinuing all elective or non-essential surgeries**, including pre-adoption spay and neutering, as well as trap-neuter-return (TNR) efforts. The absence of immediate access to spay and neuter should not be a justification for shelter euthanasia.
 - The use of adoption vouchers, foster-to-adopt programs and unaltered release without contract should all be considered at the current time.
- **Limiting shelter intake of all animals in which the need is not urgent.** This includes limiting stray cat intake only to cats that are sick, injured, in immediate danger or requiring a bite quarantine. In situations of animal hoarding or animal seizures, shelters should considered a staggered intake of animals or delay intake in cases where immediate medical intervention is not required.
- **Continuing animal sheltering operations in order to provide appropriate care for all animals currently in the facility**, including
 - Adoption and placement of available animals
 - Assitance with direct owner placement as an alternative to shelter surrender
 - Emergency foster placement to reduce shelter population
 - Return-to-owner services that cannot be conducted in the field

- When unavoidable, intake of animals that have a known contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 should be processed with appropriate additional biosecurity measures because of the current gap in knowledge and the potential risk of animals being infected and/or mechanical vectors (fomites).
 - More information can be found at [this link](#).

These measures are supported by the shelter medicine programs of the University of Florida, University of California, Davis, University of Wisconsin, University of Ohio and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), among others. The Boards of Directors of the AVQMR and the OSMA believe that these measures are in the best interest of public health, by limiting the use of personal protection equipment (PPE) and medical supplies that are needed by human health-care workers and front-line workers during this pandemic. Furthermore, these measures will allow shelters to continue to provide care to those in need, in the event that available staffing and resources are reduced.

Please note that as the situation evolves or as new information becomes available, recommendations and positions may change.