

# COVID-19 Transitioning – Guidelines for Animal Sanctuaries

## Understanding how COVID-19 spreads & the implications

Current research suggests that the SARSCoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person:

- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks loudly.
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 2 metres).  
There is also a possibility that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the COVID-19 virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, and eyes.

Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some people develop more serious complications and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness increases with age, for people with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease.

***These guidelines are subject to change depending on any updated scientific evidence and as directed by Public Health Authorities. Any standards and/or legal notices issued by the Public Health Authorities shall take priority and supersede these guidelines case of conflict***

## Recommendations for visitors coming to view animals for possible adoption

- Restrict visitors and only for essential visit.
- Restrict the number of people coming to view animals for possible adoption.
- Collect relevant information electronically or by phone of people making an appointment to visit the sanctuary. Confirm details (see below) before allowing entry into the sanctuary.
- Exercise the right of refusal of entry onto the premises of any visitors if they are visibly unwell or have uncertified respiratory symptoms
- All visitors entering the sanctuary must wear a mask or a visor and must be willing to have their temperature checked before entering the indoor premises of the sanctuary.
- On entering the sanctuary all visitors will be guided to an area/entrance where they can wash their hands with soap and water and/or sanitize them with a hand sanitiser with an appropriate 70% alcohol content to be provided by the sanctuary.
- Visitors will be informed that their contact details (name, surname, identity card number, telephone number/s and email address/es) will be kept by the management of the sanctuary for any need for possible contact tracing should a case of COVID-19 develop that can be linked to the sanctuary. This information will be kept for a period of up to 21 days for this purpose.
- Visitors coming to view animals for adoption will be asked to maintain social distancing from the employees/volunteers working at the sanctuary as advised by the sanctuary staff

and as permissible according to the nature of the visit (see social distancing section below).

- Before and after every contact with an animal, the handler and anyone petting or having contact with the animal should wash their hands.
- Limit distance from animals.
- Visitors are also strongly discouraged from putting their face against that of an animal.

### **Social distancing**

Social distancing refers to the requirement that people distance themselves from others. Public Health Authorities have determined that everyone must keep at least 2 metres from other persons (unless they are from the same household) and that in any given closed space, there must be 4 square metres of space per customer, including staff. Put signs and markings outside the entrance of the sanctuary to identify 2 metres distance. Employers/organisers should also review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase social distancing between employees themselves and between employees and customers.

### **Recommendations for employers, employees and volunteers working at the sanctuary**

- If possible, it is recommended that staff/volunteers within the sanctuary are divided in set work teams. These teams are to work different rosters and physical contact between members of different teams is to be restricted even during resting times and off days. This will ensure that if one team has to go on quarantine this does not result in many other workers needing to be on quarantine too.
- Employees/ volunteers working together for long periods of time or in close proximity should wear masks or visors to decrease likelihood of transmission.
- Any staff/volunteer who is sick will be asked not to come to the sanctuary till he/she is fully recovered.
- On entering the sanctuary all staff/ volunteers should wash their hands or sanitize them using alcohol rub provided by the sanctuary.
- On entering the sanctuary everyone must be willing for their temperature to be checked before entering an indoor premises.
- Details of volunteer contact details (name, surname, identity card number, telephone number/s and email address/es) and a meticulous record of the days and times when they attended the sanctuary should be maintained by the management for use in contact tracing should a case of COVID-19 develop that can be linked to the sanctuary.
- Staff should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Staff should wash hands frequently especially before and after every contact with an animal, before and after eating, after using the restroom and upon arrival at work and before leaving to go home.
- Use disposable hand towels to dry hands.
- Do not practice handshakes/hugs when greeting clients and colleagues.
- Wear overalls and boots/shoes which can be cleaned and washed.
- Cover their coughs and sneezes with a clean tissue or use their elbow (and no spitting).

- Staff who develop a mild cough, fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.2°C or higher), shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, loss of taste, loss of smell or diarrhoea, should call the public health helpline on 111 giving details of their symptoms.

### **Cleaning and disinfecting measures**

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID19 virus. Communal areas and facilities in the sanctuary must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected.

Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets. Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. However, it is very important to make sure that the product used is safe for animals and does not harm them in any way.

Workplaces should be cleaned and disinfected every day. Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. door handles, counters, phones and sanitary facilities (such as toilets). Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned.

Clean and disinfect animal collars, vests, leashes or harnesses, toys, food/water bowls and other supplies frequently.

Do not let other people handle items that go into the animal's mouth, such as toys and treats.

**DO NOT** wipe or bathe animals with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use.

It is important to wash the dogs' paws with soap and water (or wipes) after entering the sanctuary following a walk.

### **Deliveries, contractors and servicing technicians**

Minimise the number of employees attending to deliveries and contractors as much as possible. Delivery drivers and other contractors who need to provide maintenance or repair services or perform other essential activities, should be given clear instructions of requirements while they are on site. Ensure adequate hand washing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, are readily available for employees after socially handling deliveries. Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate with employees wherever possible. Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before handling products being delivered. Use, and ask delivery drivers and contractors to use, electronic paperwork where possible, to minimise social interaction. Where possible, set up alternatives to requiring signatures. For instance, see whether a confirmation email or a photo of the loaded or unloaded goods can be accepted as proof of delivery or collection (as

applicable). If a pen or other utensil is required for signature, ask that the pen or utensil is cleaned or sanitised before use. Ideally everyone should use their own writing instruments

For more guidance on hand-washing and the use of gloves please see link below:

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance On Hand Washing And Use Of Gloves.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance%20On%20Hand%20Washing%20And%20Use%20Of%20Gloves.pdf)

For general guidance on pets and other animals please see link below:

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Covid-19 Guidelines For Pets And Other Animals.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Covid-19%20Guidelines%20For%20Pets%20And%20Other%20Animals.pdf)