

GBGB Advice for Trainers and Veterinary Surgeons During the Coronavirus Lockdown

Advice for Vets and Clients

The following advice is taken from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) as at 23rd March 2020.

Veterinary practices are not on the list of businesses and premises that need to close and, as such, may open where **absolutely necessary**, however:

- the number of clients seen face-to-face should be kept to an absolute minimum
- you should ensure you follow the relevant guidance on social distancing
- **animals should only be seen in emergencies** or where, in the judgement of the veterinary surgeon, urgent assessment and/or treatment is needed in order to reduce the risk of patient deterioration to the point where it may become an emergency
- Routine treatments should not be carried out until further notice.
- You may offer your clients advice and consultation services via remote means, including prescribing POM-V medicines where appropriate. Under normal circumstances, this is not permitted by the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*. However, in light of recent government guidance to limit non-essential contact with others, RCVS Council has decided that there should be a temporary departure from this position and that **remote prescribing of POM-V medicines should be permitted where it is appropriate to do so and where there is no other option**

Where it is necessary to see an animal in person:

- **ask clients** if they or a member of their household are currently self-isolating or have tested positive for the virus when booking appointments and before attending any home visits or consultations
- **reduce the number of people** attending the premises to the absolute minimum and limit physical contact with clients wherever possible. This could be achieved by asking that only **one person accompanies an animal** when attending the practice, or by asking clients to wait in the waiting room, outside or even their cars while you examine their animal. The consultation with the owner could then take place over the telephone.
- Carry out **risk assessments** for all staff and observe government guidance on social distancing
- Encourage team members and clients who are considered vulnerable, eg are aged over 70, have underlying health issues or are pregnant, to stay at home

Illness or Injury

Where any greyhound shows signs of illness or sustains an injury, you should contact your usual veterinary surgeon by phone and they will provide further instructions on how to seek advice and treatment.

Vaccination

The GBGB recognises that whilst annual vaccination is required under the Rules of Racing and greyhounds may become inactive during this lockdown phase, we are working to allow a dispensation such that a greyhound out-of-time for revaccination may be allowed to have its first trial after this lockdown provided it is then vaccinated as per GBGB Rules of Racing.

If the lockdown continues for some time, then the first risk to greyhounds will be a lack of protection from Leptospirosis (spread in rat urine, ditches etc) which is one of the routine Booster components but the one that lasts the least time. If greyhounds need leptospirosis vaccination and are overdue, then speak to your local vet and ask for their assistance.

Litters of puppies are especially at risk and in the case of first vaccinations, a vet and/or vet nurse may be able to attend the kennel to administer this vital vaccination whilst observing the 2 metre social distancing Rule.

Should a greyhound be retired and rehomed during this lockdown phase, a temporary record of the greyhound's most recent vaccination can be supplied by the GBGB. Trainers should contact the GBGB Registry Team on 020 7822 0900 and select option 3.

Routine Worming and Flea Treatment

It may prove difficult to obtain these products during this lockdown; however, trainers are warned against sourcing veterinary medicines including wormers from internet retailers unless accompanied by a veterinary prescription. During these exceptional times vets may issue a prescription "remotely" which will enable you to buy the correct products from an approved supplier or local vets' practice.

Worming and flea treatments are an essential preventative measure to maintain the health and welfare of the greyhound population, especially as we enter the flea season.

A list of Approved Retailers can be found here;

<https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/InternetRetailers/accredited-retailers.aspx>

Feeding

During this lockdown phase it may be difficult to obtain your usual dog food.

Where this is the case, trainers should source a dried food with similar protein content. As dogs will not be racing, a lower protein % (Resting/maintenance food) will be perfectly adequate.

If you must switch brands of food do so gradually where possible mixing 75:25 on day 1, 50:50 day 2, 25:75 day 3 and so on.

Switching food suddenly may cause bowel upset.

Trainers may also want to reduce the amount of meat fed by a small amount to conserve supplies and to take account that the greyhounds aren't racing.

Where possible try to maintain the feeding time and constituents of the diet.

Season Suppressants

Where bitches are on pills (Norethisterone) to suppress oestrus, your usual vet should be able to provide a prescription so that you are able to continue to source pills. These may add an additional

expense for owners and trainers and therefore trainers may decide to stop suppressing bitches during this time. If this is the case, ensure that you have sufficient facilities to manage bitches which come into-season, particularly as a number may come into season at the same time following withdrawal of suppressants.

Exercise

Trainers are asked to maintain exercise at or just below normal levels for the duration of the lockdown. Please avoid public parks and spaces and observe social distancing.

The greyhound's skeleton relies on regular exercise to maintain its resilience. If dogs are rested for more than three weeks, then the bones will begin to "remodel" or weaken and when the greyhounds do return to racing they will be more susceptible to bone injuries/fractures.

Also, exercise is a great stimulus for the dogs and all attempts should be made to maintain a regular routine which is as normal as possible. We recognise that staff shortages may make things difficult but where there's a will there's a way. Further guidance on exercise and environmental enrichment to help keep dogs stimulated during this period can be found in the Code of Practice which can be found at: <https://www.gbgb.org.uk/rules-regulation/rules-of-racing/>

Diseases

The usual vigilance for diseases should be maintained. Veterinary practices will still provide emergency services as indicated above.

During COVID-19 restrictions disease investigations will be limited to telephone advice on disease control procedures. Cases of illness and sudden death should still be reported via the usual routes:

- Stipendiary stewards
- Disease and Sudden Death helpline on 0207 822 0929
- GBGB Enquiries on [020 7822 0900](tel:02078220900)
- Veterinary Health helpline on [020 7822 0913](tel:02078220913)
- Welfare Hotline on [020 7822 0917](tel:02078220917)