Team HRA,

I’m sure you’ve all been following the news about COVID-19 (“coronavirus”), and I wanted to get you more information on what HRA is doing to prepare for any eventuality. My commitment is to give you a complete picture so you know of our plans in real time, and so you will know what to should you begin to receive questions from the public. Later this evening we will be distributing information to all of our stakeholders as well: volunteers, foster families, supporters and members of the public.

This is a fluid situation and our understanding about this virus and it’s societal impacts is changing by the hour. So, we will continue to share information as we have it to ensure your safety, and that of our communities and the animals we care for.

**Taking care of ourselves and our work environment:**

Please make it a top priority to take care of yourself and help keep each other healthy. These are the basics you know: wash your hands (for 20 seconds at a time!), cover your mouth with your arm or sleeve when you cough or sneeze, and stay home if you are unwell. YOU are the most important resource at HRA and I want you all prioritizing your health, especially now.

It’s important to keep in mind that we are professionally prepared to deal with disease – we do it every day for the animals. View this as you would view a disease outbreak in the shelter – it’s just that this time, it is the people! We need to be prepared, communicate especially well with one another, and do what we can and also acknowledge to each other when we can’t do more. Some specific things we need to do – and I need your help to ensure effectiveness - are:

- Wipe down your work-station once daily, or at the end of your shift if you share a workstation;
- Clean public surfaces including door and sink handles three times daily (this task will be assigned to staff in certain work areas, and you/your team will receive information directly if this is part of your temporary duties);
- Greet everyone enthusiastically but WITHOUT shaking hands (wave, bump elbows, air high-five, tap toes, Namaste…get creative);
- If you are sick PLEASE STAY HOME. We will be changing the PTO rollover date from April 1 to May 1 in order to maximize how much PTO you have

_If you have symptoms_ of acute respiratory illness such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue, **PLEASE STAY HOME**. Currently, the CDC recommends that employees remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100.4 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines. Don’t worry about your workload; we are a team and the work will get done. Please keep in mind that it will cause more harm to your team if you come to work contagious.

_If you need to stay away from work_, please take PTO. We will be changing the PTO rollover date from April 1 to May 1 in order to maximize how much PTO you have available.

_If you do not have enough PTO available_, we are examining a variety of options so staff can take the time they need and we will continue to update you if additional options arise, but this is what we have so far:

- Option 1 – take leave without pay with the option to make up the unpaid time by working additional hours/days in future weeks. This option will require HR and your VP/Chief approval.
• Option 2 – since this is an extenuating circumstance, we will allow your PTO balance to go negative (up to a maximum of 80 hours for full-time employees and prorated for part-time employees). As this is a one-time exception you will be asked to complete a form stating that you will allow your PTO to accrue back up to a positive balance after your return to work. Should you leave the organization with a remaining negative balance, you will be asked to repay the value of that negative balance from your final paycheck.
• Option 3 - while we currently do not offer formal telework arrangements, we will consider, on a case-by-case basis, requests from employees to work from home during this time. Not all positions are conducive to telework. However, those positions with primary job duties that can be effectively performed remotely will be given consideration. Please work with your manager directly to determine if working from home is a viable option.

If you are healthy and available to work additional time to help offset any of your team member’s absences, please notify your manager so they are aware and can plan accordingly. This will be deeply appreciated!

If you have been positively diagnosed with the coronavirus or have had contact with anyone who has been confirmed to have the coronavirus, we ask that you notify HR immediately so that we can limit additional exposure to other employees, volunteers, and patrons. HR will maintain your confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Taking care of animals

• There is no indication that animals can contract this illness. However, there’s the potential the virus can live on an animal, like it can a doorknob, a countertop, or any object. We are fortunate that controlling disease transmission is familiar to us. Our diligence in caring for ourselves by using good hygiene will help ensure animals don’t act as fomites for spreading illness.

• We will be encouraging the public to make plans for their animals just like they would if they were preparing to be away from home for a couple of weeks. That is, to stock up on an extra two weeks of pet supplies and have a pet sitter identified should they need hospitalization. Essentially we are encouraging a shelter in place with pets. You should be making these preparations as well.

• If people in our foster homes fall ill, we will ask them to keep the animal if they are able to quarantine them indoors. If they aren’t, we will manage the return of the animal to HRA. While there has been no direction from CDC or any of the veterinary organizations indicating that animals should be considered for decontamination, in an abundance of caution we will bathe any returning animals to ensure they don’t act as a fomite.

• We have increased orders of all our daily supplies, from cleaning human spaces to animal food and litter- a good practice for us to have as part of ongoing disaster preparedness work in our field.

That is the information I have in real time. Please know that we have a team working on a comprehensive contingency plan, and you should expect to hear more as our plans change or evolve. Remember – as professionals you are really good at all of the things that need to happen at a time like this – disease control, disaster response, and collaboration. Collectively as a team, we are even stronger
than the sum of our parts. Thanks for all you do every day – and especially at a time like this when we need extra vigilance.

All my best,
Lisa

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The Humane Rescue Alliance protects animals, supports families, and advocates for positive change to create a world where all animals can thrive. We enrich the humanity of our communities by promoting compassion and encouraging people to find joy, comfort and companionship through the love and appreciation of animals.