



April 13, 2020

Governor Doug Burgum  
Dept. 101  
600 E. Boulevard Ave.  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0001

SENT VIA EMAIL: [governor@state.nd.us](mailto:governor@state.nd.us)

Dear Governor Burgum:

We are writing on behalf of our organizations with an urgent appeal regarding the health and welfare of companion animals in your state—and that of the veterinary professionals who provide medical care to these animals.

During this time of national public crisis, the health and safety of American families has understandably been prioritized. However, nearly 90% of US residents consider their pets to be family members, who will continue to require medical attention, as these needs arise.

In order to maximally protect colleagues, staff and the general public via physical distancing, and to conserve scarce personal protective equipment (PPE), veterinarians are now limiting in-clinic medical care to treat only essential acute problems and emergency cases.

We acknowledge that a legitimate need for routine veterinary consultation and treatment of non-emergent issues for pets will continue throughout this crisis, and pet owners should be able to assure the health and well-being of their pets while continuing to adhere to social distancing requirements. This need can best be met by expanding the availability of veterinary telemedicine services during this emergency period, and we are writing to you to urge North Dakota to join the rapidly increasing number of [states](#) that have already implemented their own interim expansions of veterinary telemedicine. *(For details, click on the 'Veterinary Care' tab in the spreadsheet and reference Column G, 'Telemedicine Regs.')*

In order to facilitate timely implementation of a similar expansion of veterinary telemedicine in *your* state, we offer the attached template language for your consideration when drafting an executive order or other action intended to broaden the use of this critical means of delivering veterinary medical services during this period. We specifically recommend that this executive order or other action encompass delivery of veterinary medical services to both new and existing patients.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue focused on safeguarding the health and well-being of the general public, companion animals, their families, and veterinary providers in your state.

Sincerely,



Lori Gossard, DVM  
North Dakota State Representative  
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Assn



North Dakota State Director  
Humane Society of the United States



Stephanie Janeczko, DVM, MS, DABVP, CAWA  
Vice President, Shelter Medicine Services  
American Society for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals



Staci Cannon, DVM, MPH, DACVPM, DABVP  
Vice President  
Association of Shelter Veterinarians



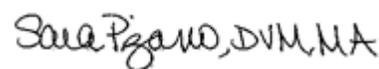
Julie Castle, CEO  
Best Friends Animal Society



Jim Tedford, CAWA  
President and CEO  
Association for Animal Welfare Advancement



Ellen Jefferson, DVM  
Maddie's Director of Lifesaving Leadership  
American Pets Alive



Sara Pizano, DVM, MA  
Team Shelter USA



Amy Kracht  
Executive Director  
Minn-Kota PAAWS, North Dakota

Cc:

Sara Lyons, Executive Secretary, North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, [slyons@nd.gov](mailto:slyons@nd.gov)  
Executive Director, North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association, [execdir@ndvma.com](mailto:execdir@ndvma.com)

## Draft Language for Veterinary Telemedicine Policy

---

The [insert title of State veterinary board / board of examiners] is actively monitoring the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The [Board / Department] is dedicated to fulfilling its primary mission of protecting human and animal health during this time, while continuing to ensure that [State] has the veterinary care workforce it needs to treat and care for animals throughout the state. To achieve these goals, pursuant to [the Executive Order issued on [date] / other relevant emergency-related declaration] issued by Governor [Name], and notwithstanding any other rule, policy or practice to the contrary, the [Board / Department] hereby authorizes all veterinarians licensed in [State] to employ telemedicine in their practice wherever possible and practicable during the current public health emergency.

It is the [Department / Board's] position that telemedicine, for both existing and new veterinary clients, may be used as a means of examining, diagnosing and treating animals, as well as establishing relationships with and communicating information regarding these topics with the animal's owner or caretaker. Such use of veterinary telemedicine shall include prescribing new medications or renewing existing prescriptions. Furthermore, the [Board / Department] notes that any applicable standards of care and patient confidentiality requirements still apply in the telemedicine setting, and that it is necessary to note in the patient's records that treatment was provided via telecommunication.

As this situation is fluid, it may be necessary for the [Board / Department] to revisit these actions. Please continue to check the [Board's / Department's] website for any updated information, and contact the [Board / Department] at [insert contact information] with any further concerns.