

Friday 13th March, 2020

Caring for animals on site during a coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Dear Colleagues

The welfare of animals on your site in the event of a coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will depend on how prepared you are and the decisions you make.

Your Animal Welfare Plan outlines:

- what you need to do to help safeguard your animals on site
- what actions you need to take to ensure your safety
- what actions you take to protect your staff and students.

Each school should consider developing their own contingency plan in the case of a potential school closure and reduced access to resources and supplies. The following are issues your plan should address – but obviously the details of each school's plan will depend on the number and type of animals kept and the capacity of the school, its staff and students.

A good plan;

- is prepared well before coronavirus (COVID-19) affects your school community
- is written down, so that the details are on hand when you need them
- is reviewed regularly so you know how it will go in the instance of school closure or loss of resources
- is created with the animal ethics focus person, supervising teacher and school Principal, and covers all animals on site
- is broadly distributed around the school community, but in particular, to those with responsibilities for the animals.

It includes what to do:

- before coronavirus (COVID-19) affects your school community
- during a school closure or isolation period
- to be adaptable to unforeseen circumstances.

Making decisions when (or if) coronavirus (COVID-19) threatens is too late.

Unexpected things can happen in an emergency so you will need to adapt to changing circumstances and have a plan that will work in different situations.

Your plan should consider questions like:

- If the school was to close, what exemptions are in place for staff/students to be permitted on site to care for animals?
- Do you need to develop a roster for caring for animals? How will you ensure people do not come in contact with one another while on site?
- How will security or the police know who is meant to be on site and who isn't?
- What hygiene practices will be implemented for those staff/students permitted on site?
- Are there animals on site which can be temporarily taken home?
- Is there enough food and supplies to last a prolonged period of time?
- Is there someone in your community who can help (for example a farmer or animal manager)?
- Who is in charge and how do the people looking after the animals contact that person?
- What level of authority do people caring for the animals have? For example, if a sheep is attacked by a dog, can the person caring for the sheep call a vet? Can they euthanize the sheep?
- Who maintains facilities if necessary. For example, if a fence is damaged, can they employ a contractor to repair a fence?

Each school's plan will be unique to their site and context. You may wish to refer to the *Standard Operating Procedures for the use of Animals in Schools*, page 12 for information regarding security and holiday/weekend care. Regarding cross contamination between humans and animals, coronaviruses comprise many different individual viruses all of which infect different species and have different effects. Except in extremely rare circumstances, animals can't catch human coronaviruses and humans cannot catch coronaviruses from other species. Therefore, animals are not a threat.

If you have any questions related to developing this plan, please contact:

Alice Dunlop (alice.dunlop@cesa.catholic.edu.au on 83016107) or Anna Mirasgentis (anna.mirasgentis@cesa.catholic.edu.au on 83016864)

Yours sincerely



Anna Mirasgentis
Chairperson
Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee