



To our Dear Clients,

The last few months have been very difficult for everyone. We greatly appreciate your patience and support as we have done our best to navigate the challenges of providing exceptional veterinary care to your pets while trying to maintain a safe work environment for our staff.

We know how much your pets mean to you and we recognize the importance that our services provide for them – both in wellness, and particularly when sick or injured. Please know that our team is working tirelessly around the clock 24 hours a day to provide this care. Our doctors and staff are coming in early, staying late, and working extra days to try and keep up with this new demand. We are busier than we have ever been and are working in conditions that are far from ideal. We have had to put measures in place to make sure that we provide as safe a working environment as we can while not compromising our standards of care.

Please understand that our team members do not make the rules, they simply adhere to the protocols that I have put into place. Any frustrations that you may have regarding our protocols should be directed to me, and not them. As hard as they are working on your behalf, they deserve your understanding and kindness. We have always welcomed constructive feedback and are happy to discuss your concerns but request patience and understanding during these unusual times.

I have outlined some of our current protocols in an effort to help you prepare as much as possible for your next visit with us, and to address public concerns:

1. **Curbside service:** To help limit the spread of Covid-19, we have instituted both curbside check-ins and social distancing policies. Our building is open to staff members only. In order for us to stay open and provide care, we have to prioritize the health and safety of our team. As challenging as curbside service is, it would be impossible to safely handle the volume of patients we see each day while allowing clients in. We will consider re-opening to clients only when we feel that it is absolutely safe to do so.
2. **When clients are allowed on site:** If you do see clients entering the building it is because their pet has come in for euthanasia or they are visiting a critically ill pet in ICU. These are difficult and sensitive moments where we felt this accommodation should be made. If you come in to visit or have a euthanasia appointment, please note that our policy is no more than 2 people are permitted in the building with the pet and all must wear masks.

**3. Triage/Wait times:** Our emergency service practices triage medicine. We cannot make appointments and the sickest must be seen first. Our triage staff will determine your pet's level of criticality and place you in a queue. We will make every effort to maintain your position in that queue. Your position is highly variable and your pet will be seen later if a more emergent case must be seen before yours. We know how frustrating that can feel but imagine that was your companion who had a life-threatening condition that needed to be addressed immediately.

We have instituted a new **drop off policy** in those instances where we are experiencing a surge of emergent patients that need to be seen before yours. You will have the option of signing drop off forms and the doctor on duty will contact you when they will be focusing their efforts on your pet's needs. We hope this will help mitigate some of the extended wait times at our hospital for less urgent pets.

Our philosophy has always been to see every patient in need. There have been days and nights that we simply have not had the capacity to take on any more patients, and you may be directed to a nearby emergency clinic or back to your day veterinarian. If this happens, please know that it is not because we don't want to see you, but that we are simply overwhelmed with cases.

**4. Phones/hold times:** Curbside service has caused many disruptions in our normal client service processes among these is the sharp rise in the volume of calls coming into our hospital. We have doubled our Client Service Representative staff in the last 2 months to help meet this new demand. Please be patient with them. They are new and trying to learn a complex process in far from ideal circumstances.

I apologize if you get put on a long hold or your call is dropped due to a call volume surge that overwhelms the phone system. When you call, please listen to all the prompts and go to the department that best matches your questions or issues. This will reduce the number of calls our front staff has to handle and leave the phone lines open to our clients and pets in our parking lot.

**5. Staffing:** We have hired 17 new staff members to help us meet these unprecedented needs of the community since the start of the pandemic, and we are continuing to add more. Please know our doctors and staff are working as fast as they can every minute. With the number of patients that we are seeing in a 24-hour period, wait times, hold times, client frustration seems unavoidable.

Over 90% of the cases we receive are sick or injured with many of them in a critical state. These cases are complex and labor intensive. They require bloodwork, x-rays, CT scan, ultrasound, endoscopy, surgery, CPR, immediate oxygen therapy, and critical care treatment in our ICU. This requires time for our doctors and nurses to evaluate patients, formulate diagnostic plans, and execute medical or surgical treatments.



Our management team is working extremely hard to smooth processes and find solutions to the new demands and issues this pandemic has brought with it. We are grateful to you for your continued support and look forward to caring for your pets in the days, weeks, months, and years to come. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Hospital Manager- Joe Hinz, RVT, at any time. We can both be reached at 209-577-3481.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

Kipp Magnussen, DVM