

## Safe Vet Care During the Coronavirus Pandemic

by Gayle Watkins, PhD



As more and more of society shuts down due to coronavirus, you may be wondering whether you should take your puppy, litters, or dogs to the veterinarian right now. As you make that decision, you must balance your animal's health with that of you and your vet team. Here are our recommendations for taking your dog, pup or litter of pups to the vet today.

- 1. DO NOT TAKE YOUR DOG OR PUP TO THE VET IF YOU ARE FEELING ILL, HAVE A FEVER OR COUGH, HAVE ENCOUNTERED SOMEONE WITH COVID-19, OR HAVE TRAVELED TO A HIGH-RISK AREA!** The health and safety of our veterinary teams are essential to us and our dogs. Please communicate clearly with your clinic if any of these things are true and find someone else to take your dog in.
- 2. Reschedule your appointment** if it is not an emergency or time sensitive until you see how the virus affects your area. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, any appointment may carry some risk.
- 3. If you are a breeder with a litter, consider giving distemper-parvo shots yourself,** if legal in your country. This is doable in the US and Canada but many EU countries allow breeders this option. Check your laws and always buy from reputable sources, like [Revival Animal Health](#). You can also handle your own deworming from online suppliers.

*If you must go to the vet...*

- 4. Many clinics are changing their procedures and hours so your first step must be to call the clinic before getting in the car!**
- 5. Ask if your vet is offering telemedicine,** allowing you to connect online and avoid a trip to the clinic.
- 6. See if your vet will mail you prescription refills and offers curbside pick-up of food.**
- 7. This may seem silly but before you head out,** go to the bathroom at home so you are comfortable waiting in the car and take a minute to pack a few things for the visit. See that list below.

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- 8. Know and prepare for the new appointment protocol.** Many clinics are now requesting that you stay in your cars in the clinic parking lot. Instead of going in, you call when you arrive and a staff member comes out to get your dog or pup when they are ready to exam it. The vet team does the exam, calls you to discuss and get your approval of the treatment plan, and treats your dog. A staff member brings your dog back out to you and gets payment.

You can see [more details about the new protocol here](#).

## PREPARING YOUR PUP FOR THE NEW PROTOCOL

This new protocol is safer for all of the people involved BUT it may result in worried or frightened dogs. It also means that you won't be there to support your dog if it becomes frightened. For me, this is a big concern because I want my dogs to LOVE going to the vet. As a result, I'm a bit of a control freak about how my dogs and especially my puppies are handled at vet clinics. This is what I'm doing to lessen the effects of the new protocol.

- **Your big dogs should wear a familiar collar and leash and my pups will be in familiar carriers that they've played in at home.** Hospital leads work but may upset dogs unfamiliar with them and are completely ineffective for pups that aren't leash trained.
- If your vet will allow it, **transport your litter of pups in a crate on a dolly or in a doggy stroller.** Wipe these down with disinfectant before and after sending it into the clinic for everyone's safety. [Rescue disinfectant](#) is still available on US Amazon at the time of this writing.
- **Prepare and take a sandwich bag holding a variety of delicious treats** for your dog. Pass this to the vet staff with your dog and ask them to offer them generously. These treats might include cubed cheese and meat, commercial treats, and even some of your dog's kibble. Our puppies favorites include Fresh Pet Vital Essentials, if you can get it.
- If you are sending in puppies or small dogs, **include a small blanket with your odor on it for them to wrap your pup in or put on the treatment table.** It can be bagged and laundered immediately after the appointment.
- Tell the staff of your concerns when you make the appointment and again when they take your dog. **Ask them to have some fun with your dog or pups during the appointment.** Even if they are busy, most vets and techs will take a little time to make a dog comfortable and ensure pups have a good time.
- **Be patient while waiting.** Read, listen to music or talk on the phone but know it may be a while since your vet team is working under more challenging circumstances. Go for a walk but be sure to take your phone with you so your vet can get in touch during the appointment.
- Bathe your dog or pups as soon as you get home. [Dawn dish soap](#) does a good job of cutting through body oils and is safe for your dog. **DO NOT PUT HAND SANITIZER OR OTHER DISINFECTANT DIRECTLY ON YOUR DOG!!!**

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## THINGS TO TAKE TO THE VET

- disposable gloves
- hand sanitizer
- plastic trash bags
- leash and collar
- crate and dolly
- doggy stroller
- scented blanket or towel
- bag of a variety of delicious treats
- additional towels
- dog shampoo or Dawn dish soap
- water and a bowl for your dog
- potty box for litters of pups

The world is changing. Our vet teams are adapting so we need to as well. Add your suggestions to the comments on this page and please share this with your friends and family.

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