

**From:** HQ <HQ@vetireland.ie>

**Date:** Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 12:51

**To:** HQ <HQ@vetireland.ie>

**Subject:** VetALERT 10g/20 - COVID-19 Update - 25th March 2020

## Veterinary Ireland COVID-19 Update - 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019

### **SUMMARY:**

- Veterinary Practices - “**Essential Professional Services**”
- Taoiseach’s Address of 24.3.20: Click [HERE](#)
- NPHET recommendations on **essential RETAIL outlets**: Click [HERE](#)
- List of **essential RETAIL outlets**: Click [HERE](#)
- Veterinary Ireland COVID-19 Website - Click [HERE](#)

Log on to the [HSE.IE](#) and [GOV.IE](#) COVID-19 update pages on a regular basis

Take care and God bless

Peter Bishton  
Deputy Chief Executive

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### **VETERINARY PRACTICES - ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

As noted in [VetALERT 10f/20](#), Veterinary Ireland has been in ongoing contact with DAFM in relation to the implications of Covid-19 for the veterinary profession. DAFM’s current stated policy is that the agricultural industry will be kept moving to the greatest extent possible, while remaining in compliance with HSE / Government guidelines.

In addition, and in light of the Taoiseach’s address and the list of “Essential Retail Outlets”, Veterinary Ireland has also had confirmed, through it links to Government via the Small Firms Association (SFA), that veterinary practices, along with GPs and dentists, are considered essential professional/medical services.

The SFA is also drawing up a list for Government of most essential businesses, should further restrictions be introduced, and Veterinary Practices are again on this list.

Also, the European Commission (EC), in the updated [EC Guidelines for Green Lanes](#), has designated veterinary medicines as ‘essential goods’, in order to continue to ensure access to medicines for livestock farmers, veterinary practitioners and other animal owners.

### **[TAOISEACH’S ADDRESS 24.3.20](#)**

The Taoiseach yesterday announced new and additional measures to combat the impact of Covid-19.

These measures include extending schools closures until 19<sup>th</sup> April, the closure of “non-essential retail” outlets and details of an improved income continuance scheme.

While such scheme has yet to be put in place, the following is what is understood to be included:

- Temporary wage subsidy of 70% of take home pay up to a maximum weekly tax-free amount of €410 p/w (€500 p/w equivalent before tax) to help affected businesses to maintain payment of employees;
- COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment for workers who have lost jobs due to the crisis to be increased from €203 to €350 p/w;
- COVID-19 Illness Payment to also be increase to €350 p/w;
- Self-Employed workers to be eligible for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (€350 p/w) directly from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, rather than through Revenue.

On recommendation from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), all **non-essential retail outlets** are to close to members of the public. All other retail outlets are to implement social distancing.

The Regulations have yet to be signed into law, but an **indicative** list has been drawn up of essential “**retail**” businesses.

Full details of the NPHE recommendation can be found [HERE](#).

A copy of the Essential Retail List can be found [HERE](#).

**As noted above, Veterinary Ireland maintains that veterinary practices are “Essential Professional Services” – this has also been confirmed by the Small Firms Association (SFA), through its Government contacts.**

Veterinary Practices should consider the advice at the end of the list, and ensure that the guidelines for those businesses remaining open are adhered to:

All of these outlets must implement social distancing measures:-

- **Ensure adequate distancing between customers and retail assistants in line with public health guidelines;**
- **Only let people into the store in small groups and ensure spaces are not crowded;**
- **Manage queues inside and outside the door to maintain necessary social distancing;**
- All retail outlets are encouraged to designate certain times of the day to facilitate vulnerable groups who may need to use their services;
- Where practicable and in so far as is possible, parents are encouraged to limit bringing their children with them when visiting essential retail outlets;
- All retailers are encouraged to provide on-line services where that is possible and appropriate to minimise footfall;
- All such retailers are encouraged to offer contactless payment arrangements;

In addition, and as advised by the Veterinary Ireland President in [VetALERT 11/20](#), Veterinary practices should take all necessary steps to minimise contact with people. Many practices are taking the lead in this already. Examples include

- **Following HSE guidelines on handwashing**
- **Drawing up SOPs for staff in the event they feel unwell**
- **Only allowing one client into the shop or waiting room at a time**
- **Encouraging clients to phone ahead so orders are compiled in advance**
- **Using nurses to restrain animals rather than the owner**
- **Minimising contact between ambulatory vets and practice-based staff**
- **Refraining from going into farmers houses for tea etc.**
- **Trying to maintain a 2 meter gap between clients and vets/nurses/admin staff**
- **Wearing of gloves, sanitising of surfaces**