



25 March 2020, v1.0

RUVASA guidelines during COVID-19 lock-down

Introduction

The Ruminant Veterinary Association of South Africa (RuVASA) would like would like to inform large animal practitioners of suggested guidelines that can be followed during the lock-down period for the COVID-19 outbreak. This document serve a supplementary purpose to the suggested guidelines posted by the SAVA which was aimed primarily at small animal practitioners. This document will be updated as the situation unfold. In addition, see also the document sent out by DAFF, dated 25 March entitled: “Covid-19 contingency plan for animal production animal and veterinary services for the duration of the lockdown – 26th March – 16th April 2020. “ **This document makes it clear that “It is therefore important that all non-essential services, whether they are in a facility that is regarded as essential or not, must be suspended for the duration of the lockdown. “**

It is accepted that large animal veterinarians would need to travel between farms. As such, vets will be in contact with different farms and will pose a risk in terms of contraction and spread of the disease. It is therefore very important to adhere to the principles as outlined by the letter from the SAVA. In this light, classifying services as essential and non-essential is important. Furthermore, owner/farm worker risk assessment, social distancing plus protective action should be performed.

Even though some veterinary services might generally be considered routine work, these visits should be evaluated on a case to case basis. It is accepted that some practices have these “routine” visits scheduled months or even a year in advance and as such, cannot reasonably postpone these services if no more space is available on their calendars. If these visits can be postponed, then do so. Some consultations can be performed telephonically, and clinical visits should only be performed if an examination is required. Revising/updating vaccination plans can be done and clients informed telephonically or via electronic medium.

All visits:

Phone beforehand and determine the risk status of the farm and instruct the client to provide gloves and masks to those that you will be in contact with. If the farm constitutes a high-risk then the need for the visit should be carefully considered. If a visit is essential and only single animals (sick animals/post mortems) are involved then arrange beforehand that the animal should be accessible upon your arrival. Only the minimum number of helpers should be available in case you need assistance. If you can manage by yourself, do so, even if it takes more time than usual. Observe all helpers/clients for respiratory signs and limit their involvement or recommend medical attention if relevant.

For any farm visit it is recommended that you provide all clients and workers with gloves and masks if the farmer did not do so. Wear protective gear yourself as outlined by the SAVA document.

Maintain social distancing throughout.

Routine work:

Pregnancy diagnosis, Male fertility testing, Post-partal examinations, udder health or anoestrus visits etc. should be postponed if reasonably possible, however, in some farming

operations, or as explained above, these visits cannot be postponed and must proceed provided adequate precautions are taken.

Procedures such as dehorning, TB testing (routine biennial testing), castrations etc. should be postponed.

Emergency work:

Clinical cases, outbreaks, surgical cases and other relevant day to day emergencies should be continue as per usual, given the special precautions as outlined above.

Medication or sales

Contact should be limited so it is recommended that you encourage your clients to phone/email in advance with their requirements or make use of e-commerce. The relevant products can then be packaged prior to their arrival. The packages can be handed over to the client without the need to enter your clinic. Another alternative would be to deliver the packages where possible.

Clients visiting your hospital

Guidelines as per the SAVA document.

It is up to each of us to make sure that food supply and farm animal welfare is maintained while at the same time limiting the spread of COVID-19. Make use of your own professional judgement and epidemiological knowledge to further the profession and serve the people of this country.

RuVASA would welcome any constructive suggestions and input that could be of value in this situation.