

## **COVID-19 Guidance for Pet Grooming, Sitting & Walking Services**

Businesses that provide pet services, including pet grooming, pet sitting, pet walking and pet training services are permitted to open. This guidance document describes the requirements that pet grooming, sitting and walking service providers must comply with under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#).

Owners and operators of pet grooming, sitting and walking services have a responsibility to assess the risks associated with their operations, and their ability to mitigate these risks. They are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who participate in their operations (e.g. staff, volunteers, clients). See [Provincial Orders](#) for more information.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government's reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

### **COVID-19 and Pets**

- A small number of pets worldwide, including cats and dogs, have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19.
- Evidence is limited, though it appears that the COVID-19 virus can spread from people to animals in some situations.
- The risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered low.
- Pets should be treated like other people.
  - Owners should limit interactions between their pet and people outside their household.
  - If a person inside the household becomes sick, isolate that person from everyone else, including the pet.
- For more information see [COVID-19 Advice for Pet Owners](#).

## Measures for all Workplaces, Businesses and Organizations

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and clients safe. Operators must also consider the following:

- **Health screening**
  - All staff must complete a [health screening questionnaire](#) before each work shift.
  - Request clients self-screen for COVID-19 before the service. Clients should notify the pet service provider of any COVID-19 risks so that extra precautions can be taken.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  - Clean hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer frequently, including before and after touching pets and their supplies, and during the service as required.
- **Cleaning and disinfection**
  - Pet service providers should use their own supplies, rather than supplies belonging to the client (e.g. leash, pet waste bags).
  - Assign staff their own tools/equipment, if possible. All items used during the service must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.

## Safety Plan

Service providers must prepare and make available a safety plan, and the plan must:

- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID-19.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning, disinfecting, personal protective equipment (PPE) and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review, on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

Use the [COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist](#) to develop your safety plan.

## Pick-up and Drop-off of Pets

- Limit the number of people inside the facility at one time to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person.
- Arrange for the delivery and pick-up of pets in a curbside manner, if possible. This can be done by:
  - The pet service provider attending the curbside of the client's residence; or
  - The client delivering/picking up the pet at the curbside of the pet service provider's business.
- Have customers call first before picking up and dropping off their pet.

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- Create a designated pickup area and post clear signage to identify its location and boundaries.
- If picking up a pet from a client's residence, staff should coordinate with the client a designated safe space to conduct pick-up and drop-off of pets in advance of the service.

### Practice Physical Distancing

- Maintain at least two metres [physical distancing](#) from people you do not live with.
- Reduce the number of staff permitted in a space to allow for at least two metres physical distancing at all times.
- Maintain physical distancing during pick-up and drop-off of pets, as much as possible.
- For dog walking services, select routes that are not busy to minimize interactions with others.
- Limit close contact with the pet, including petting, hugging, kissing and being licked.

### Modify Services

- Use an appointment-based system.
- Cancel activities where physical distancing or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.
- Allow sufficient time between clients to allow safe and distanced pick-up/drop-off, and sufficient cleaning and disinfection in between clients, if required.
- Minimize the amount of time spent in a client's home, if entry is required.
- If pets must be fed in their homes, ask the owner to leave the food and dish close to the entry way of the home to minimize the time and surfaces touched in the client's home.
- Implement flexible cancellation policies to encourage clients to reschedule if they are feeling unwell.

### Use of Masks and Face Coverings

- All staff and clients must wear a [mask or face covering](#) while in indoors public spaces.
  - Masks are strongly recommended if staff are required to enter a client's home.
  - Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Operators **must develop a policy** on the wearing of masks, as per the City of Toronto [bylaw](#), and train staff accordingly. Use the [checklist and sample policy](#).

### Encourage Vaccination

- Encourage patrons and staff who were born in 2016 or earlier to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information [about the vaccine and where to get vaccinated](#).
- Post signs and share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), available in multiple languages.

## Increase Public Health Awareness

- Provide information to staff and clients about business operations (e.g. public health measures) through different communication platforms (e.g. web, email, social media).
- Encourage staff and clients to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Download information and display posters in high visibility areas in your business to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
  - [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

## Other Resources

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[How to Care for Pets and Other Animals If You Have COVID-19 or You or Your Pets Have Been Exposed to COVID-19](#)

[Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Veterinary Services \(Pet Groomers/Dog Walkers/Pet Boarding/Animal Care Providers\) During COVID-19](#)

## More Information

For more information, visit our website at [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19) or call us at 416-338-7600.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *COVID-19 If You Have Pets*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html>

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (2020). *Guidance on Health and Safety for Veterinary Services (Pet Groomers/Dog Walkers/Pet Boarding/Animal Care Providers) During COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsps.ca/wsps/media/site/resources/downloads/covid-19-veterinary-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf>