

FDA Pushes Telework Visits for Veterinarians to Encourage Social Distancing

In an effort to encourage social distancing between veterinarians and owners of sick animals, the Food and Drug Administration announced Tuesday that it would waive portions of the federal veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) that requires in-person visits.

Typically, the federal VCPR definition requires that veterinarians physically examine animal patients or visit the locations where the animals are kept. The FDA said that under the relaxed guidelines, a vet could remotely examine and diagnose a group of farm animals, and then authorize the use of certain drugs in the animals' feed.

"We need to provide veterinarians with the latitude to expand the use of telemedicine in the care of animals, not only pets but also the animals that produce our food," FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn said in a statement. "The FDA is providing flexibility that will help veterinarians maintain the health of animals during the pandemic, while allowing for the social distancing that is so important in limiting the further spread of coronavirus disease across the country and the world."

The agency cautioned that veterinarians still need to consider their state and local VCPR requirements.