

# Pets: 'Everything is on pause, so protect your animals'

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Dog viewings and adoptions occur outside now. There has been a decrease in cat room volunteers, but a bump in dog walkers, shelter supervisor Stephen Hildreth said.

Panic-buying at local grocery stores means some stores are limiting how much toilet paper and dog food a customer can buy at one time. The policy has had some unintended consequences.

Hildreth shifted to buying animal food online after Costco limited the number of bags the shelter could purchase. Costco purchases were typically supplemented by weekly donations of food. The shelter often received five to six bags of food a week from people. With coronavirus, those donations have fallen away, Hildreth said.

But he would rather people hold on to their pet food if money is tight and they need what they have for their own animals.

Meanwhile, drop-offs of pets at the shelter are neither higher nor lower than usual.

Hildreth believes Brown's order against residential evictions is helping some people who may have been on the cusp of losing their housing, or forced by costs to shift into housing that does not allow pets, to hold onto their animals instead.

Hildreth hopes the order will buy people time to come up with other plans for pets, whether that means finding the animals a new home entirely or temporary homes with friends or family. The shelter is often where people turn when they don't have time to come up with a better plan, Hildreth said.

The animal shelter is preparing for a possible shutdown if cases of coronavirus skyrocket. Hildreth has a list of volunteers who will foster shelter animals in a worst-case scenario.

Five cases have been reported in Clatsop County so

## Washington state to keep schools closed through school year over virus

By RACHEL LA CORTE  
Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee and state schools Superintendent Chris Reykdal announced Monday that due to the coronavirus outbreak schools will remain physically closed for the remainder of the school year and that the state's more than 1.2 million public and private K-12 students will continue distance learning until the end of June.

Schools have been shut statewide since March 17, and were originally scheduled to reopen April 27. Now, that closure is extended until midnight June 19 — when the spring term ends — and schools are encouraged to continue to provide distance learning.

The order also asks schools to start planning

far. However, limited access to testing means the full scope of the virus' spread in the county is unknown.

The lack of testing bothers veterinarian Dannel Davis on several levels.

First, there is the difficulty of understanding the spread of the disease in the community. But then, with uncertainty about where the county falls along the expected curve, it is hard for Davis to make some plans for her business.

Davis, who owns Astoria Animal Hospital, doesn't expect things to return to the way they were before — at least not right away

for a potential expansion of the order into the summer and fall.

Under the order, some in-person and on-site services like meetings with seniors to help finish up final projects and tutoring support is allowed only if social distancing and proper hygiene practices are followed.

Last week, Inslee extended orders to keep nonessential businesses closed and most of the state's residents home through May 4, saying that social distancing measures must remain in place an additional month in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Violation of the order is a gross misdemeanor, but the governor's office has said the goal is education, not to arrest people.

There have been more than 330 COVID-19 deaths and more than 7,900 confirmed cases to date in the state.

— but without the data that comes with testing everyone, "There's always going to be that lingering question of who is positive and who is not," she said.

Davis is a self-described safety nut. Her practice is located off U.S. Highway 101-Business and she makes her staff wear reflective safety vests when they go out to get the mail.

The arrival of coronavirus means she is taking even more precautions — personally and professionally — and she is asking her customers to do the same for their own sakes, as well as for the safety of

their pets.

"Right now, veterinary offices aren't really open," she said. "Everything is on pause, so protect your animals. ... Keep everything closer to you that you care about."

Until things return to normal, Davis is telling people to take simple preventive measures: come up with a plan for pet care in case you become sick, keep up on flea treatments, walk dogs on leash and bring your cats inside at night. After all, you can't predict what an off-leash dog is going to do and it's the time of year when many wild animals are starting to birth young, potentially putting them in conflict with prowling cats, Davis noted.

"Just the basic public health of animal care, if you will," she said. "That's what we need to do."

### Conserving supplies

Under Brown's order, organizations like veterinary clinics must conserve personal protective equipment like face masks and eye protection. Exams, vaccinations and other types of nonsurgical pet care are allowed to continue if they don't require the use of the equipment. But this exists alongside other orders of physical distancing from clients and, as much as possible, among staff.

Clinics have gone to different measures to comply and still remain open.

Like many other local clinics, Columbia Veterinary Hospital in Astoria now asks people to wait in their cars for appointments. A staff member comes out to retrieve pets.

It's a workaround they may keep in place as an option for customers in the future, said Kristin Zedwick, a veterinarian and co-owner of Columbia Veterinary.

"We've had some clients who've said, 'This curbside thing is amazing. I don't have to get out of the car, my dog is less stressed,'" Zedwick said.

The clinic's previous owner,

Dr. Larry Goza, was a popular veterinarian and the clinic is known to be a lower-cost option for pet care. Before the coronavirus, the lobby could be a busy, crowded place — fine for some animals and their owners, hell for others.

Columbia Veterinary has also looked at using telemedicine, essentially a Skype-style appointment. Every case is different, but a veterinarian can usually see enough to tell someone if they need to bring their pet in immediately or something less serious is

going on.

Emergencies and medical needs aside, veterinarians noted that pets are important companions during difficult times.

"For me, I can't imagine life without having animals around me," Davis said.

While it may be stressful to not have easy access to a veterinarian for more mundane questions, Davis said this could be an opportunity to spend time working with your animals, training your dog — or even your cat.

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## Coping with COVID-19: Care for your mental health

This is a strange and difficult time for everyone's mental health, to say the least. The uncertainty brought by the coronavirus pandemic can trigger anxiety, the isolation of social distancing can trigger depression, and the focus on washing hands can lead to compulsive behaviors.

In a situation like this, we need to be kind to ourselves and others by taking stock of our emotions and caring for our mental health.



**ALLISON WHISENHUNT, LCSW**  
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### Coping with uncertainty

One danger of uncertainty is that it leads us to create stories and fill in the blanks. We do this all the time in normal circumstances, so it makes sense that we would fall back on this behavior in this time of stress. The trouble is that we often act on these stories.

For example, here and in many parts of the country, people made up a story about running out of toilet paper. Hoarding toilet paper became one way some people could regain a sense of control.

If you didn't run out to buy a case of TP, it's easy to feel judgment toward others who did. However, maybe toilet paper wasn't your item of choice and you bought extra beans, rice, flour. Or, maybe you didn't buy anything extra and instead became vigilant about diet, exercise, hand-washing, reading the news, etc.

Many of these activities are healthy—in proper doses. However, it's good to keep our stories in perspective with these habits of mind:

- Recognize when you are making up a story, often with exaggeration. Watch for times you are using extreme words like "always" and "never."

- Recognize how this story is making you feel. Are you tense? Breathing fast?
- Fact check your story with someone you trust.
- Distract yourself with something that will prevent you from focusing on the false story.

### Focus on what you CAN control

Even in the most difficult times, you can control many things that directly affect your physical and mental health, including:

- What you put into your body. Healthy food and water are the best way to support your immune system.
- How you move your body. You can walk, run, stretch, or follow a workout video.
- Where you go and the exposure risks you create and take. Bottom line, stay home!
- Washing your hands often and not touching your face.

You can also protect your mental health by controlling your activities. Many people in our community have lost their daily routines because of school closures, businesses closing, layoffs, or being told to work from home. It's so important right now to create your own daily schedule and stick to it. This starts with following your usual morning routine of waking up and getting ready for the day, including getting dressed. After that, you may work from home or spend time doing an enjoyable activity.

Perhaps you'd like to learn a new skill, research a topic you've always been interested in, get crafty with art and music, or try new recipes. The most important thing is to keep your mind and body active doing things that support your mental health.

### Expressing emotion

You may be experiencing many emotions right now—grief, relief, sadness, anxiety, anger, joy, love—and sometimes all at once. Whatever you are feeling is okay. Allow yourself to feel and express your emotions in healthy ways. You could write in a journal; engage in a hobby you find therapeutic; talk to supportive people by phone, text or video chat; or

schedule a virtual counseling session.

### Limiting information overload

As with so many things, social media can be both helpful and harmful. On one hand, it's a way to stay in touch with friends and family; on the other, we may feel overburdened by the tragedy of what's happening in the lives of acquaintances.

With social media, it is strongly advised you choose sites and apps that make you happy and leave you feeling inspired. Limit those that don't. If you must check on friends with social media, set a timer and sign out before you get pulled into posts that are upsetting to you.

Be aware of how often and how long you are checking the news. Ask yourself how it's making you feel. If it's anything but good, walk away.

Science that tells us that excessive worry can weaken our immune system. This is such a different situation from anything we have experienced that our usual coping tools may not be enough. Please find what works for you to best accept the uncertainty and enhance your mental health which will further protect your physical health.

### Free Mental Health Resources

**National Suicide Prevention:**  
1-800-273-8255

**The Samaritans:**  
1-877-870-4673

**Military Helpline:**  
1-888-457-4838

**Senior Loneliness Line:**  
503-200-1633

**YouthLine:**  
Call 1-877-968-8491  
Text teen2teen to 839863

**Lines for Life:**  
Call 1-800-273-8255

Text 273TALK to 839863

**Clatsop Behavioral Crisis Line:**  
503-325-5724

**Crisis Chat:**  
contact-usa.org/chat.html

**Crisis Text Line:**  
crisistextline.org

**IMAlive:**  
imalive.org

**Veteran's Crisis Line:**  
veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat