



COVID-19 impact on veterinary practices

Menu

The impact of COVID-19 on the veterinary profession has been sudden, far-reaching, and varied. Across the country, veterinary practices have made tremendous changes to ensure patients continue to receive essential veterinary care and new safety measures are implemented to protect team members and clients.

The AVMA conducted a large survey of practice owners in April 2020 to better understand how COVID-19 has affected veterinary practices. We collected over 2,000 responses representing different practice sizes, types, and species. Questions covered operational changes, client numbers, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies, financial impact, and other topics.

The results enable us to view a full picture of how COVID-19 is impacting the profession and forecast how the economic situation will evolve as the pandemic unfolds. They also offer deeper insight into the ways individual practices are being impacted--financially, operationally, and otherwise. This knowledge advances the profession on numerous levels:

- Identifies **what strategies are working** for the most successful practices and might be replicated by others.
- Provides informed economic forecasts that help practice owners and others in the profession **plan and prepare** for what's ahead.
- Supports **policy development and advocacy** on behalf of veterinarians and practices.
- Guides AVMA's **development of tools and resources** needed to support the profession.
- Provides **data at the state level** to help state veterinary medical associations understand specifically how practices in their area are being impacted, and how their state compares with others.
- Informs and empowers the veterinary community to better **plan, strategize, and succeed** during COVID-19 and beyond.

What the numbers show

OPERATIONAL CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

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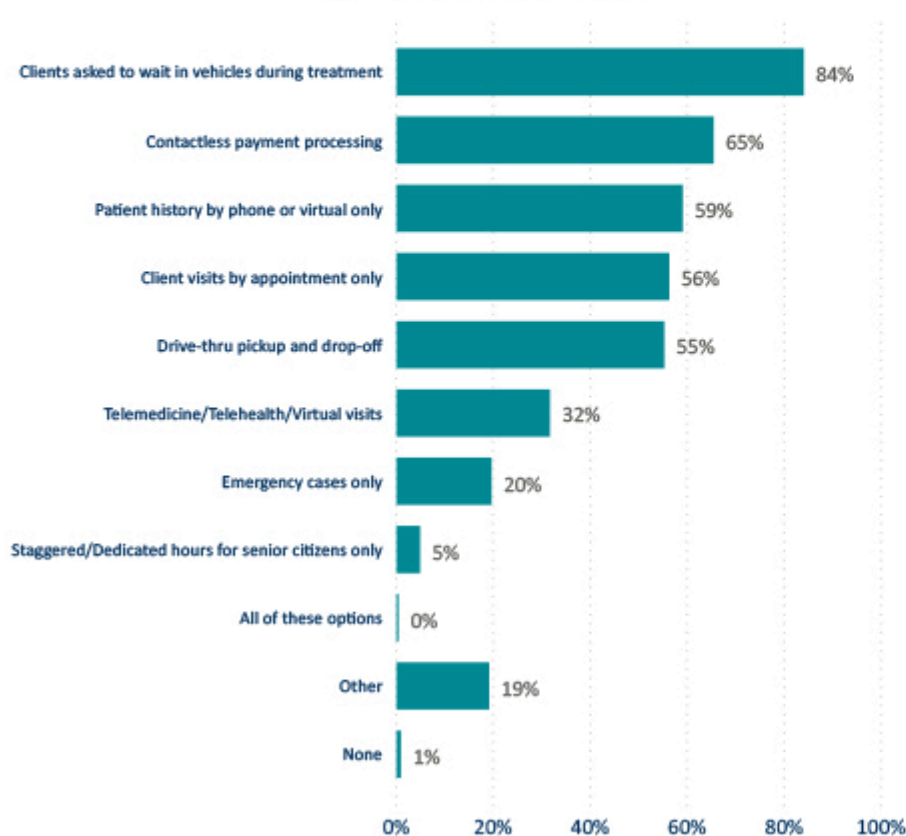
OK, I agree

2,017
Respondents

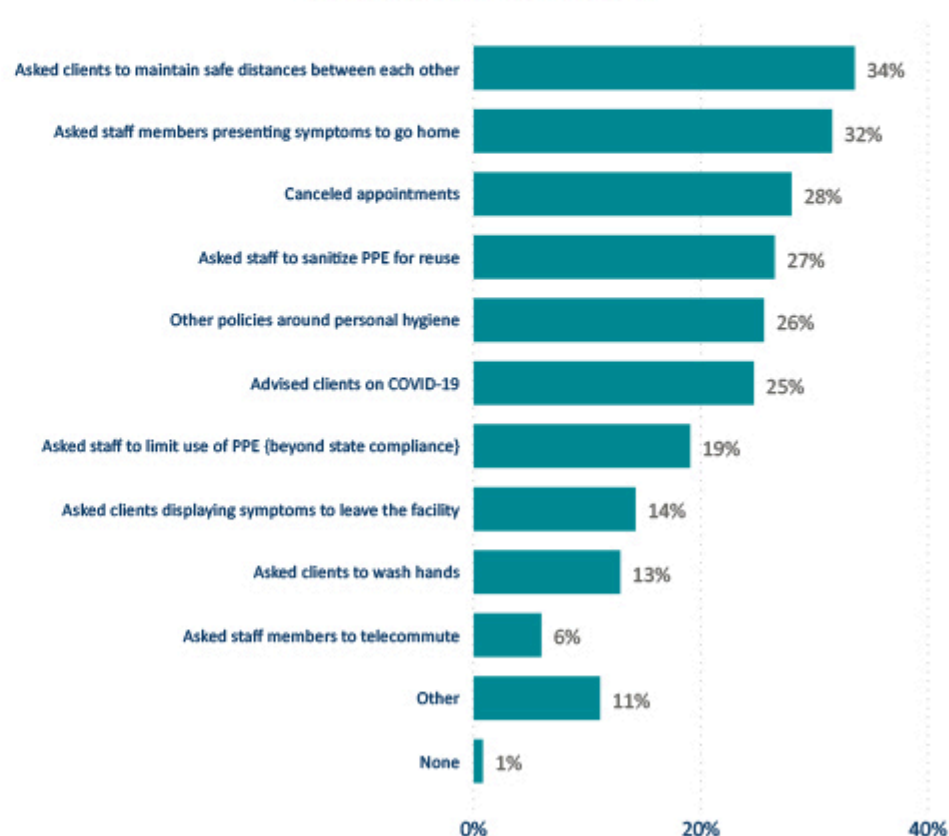
RESPONDING TO COVID-19

98% of practices are limiting client contact

Operational strategies



Precautionary measures



Practices have implemented a wide range of operational strategies and precautionary measures to continue providing veterinary care while limiting spread of the coronavirus and [prioritizing the safety of team members and clients](#).

On the operational side, the most common approach has been asking clients to wait in vehicles during animal exam and treatment (curbside care). Other operational changes include contactless payment processing, taking patient history by phone or virtually, and drive-thru pick-up and drop-off.

Over 30% of veterinary practices are using telemedicine, and close to 20% of practices were only seeing emergency-related cases at the time of the survey.

Precautionary measures have included asking clients to maintain social distancing, asking team members with symptoms of illness to remain at home, and canceling at least some appointments. Over 25% of practices have asked staff to sanitize and reuse PPE, while 20% have asked staff to limit the use of PPE beyond state requirements wherever possible to mitigate shortages.

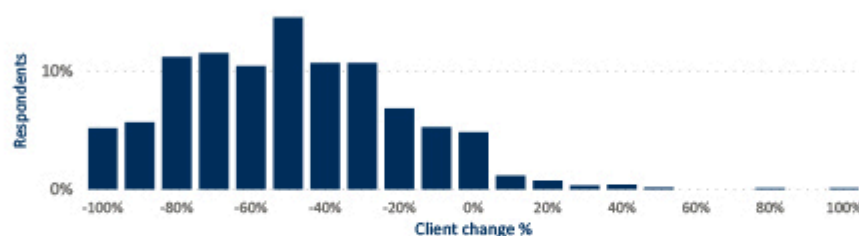
BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL IMPACT

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PRACTICES

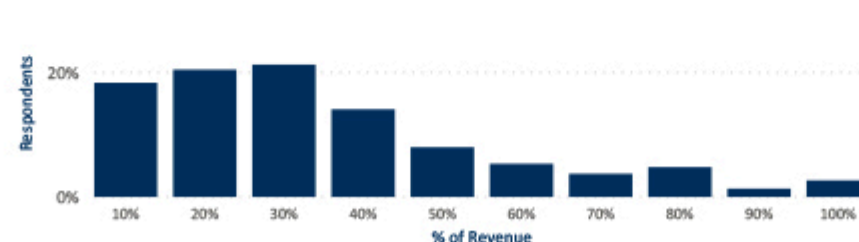
Avg cash
shortfall for April
\$17K

Avg anticipated
cash shortfall for
May
\$23K

Client change since COVID-19



Cash shortfall % for April



Most locations are
experiencing cash shortfalls



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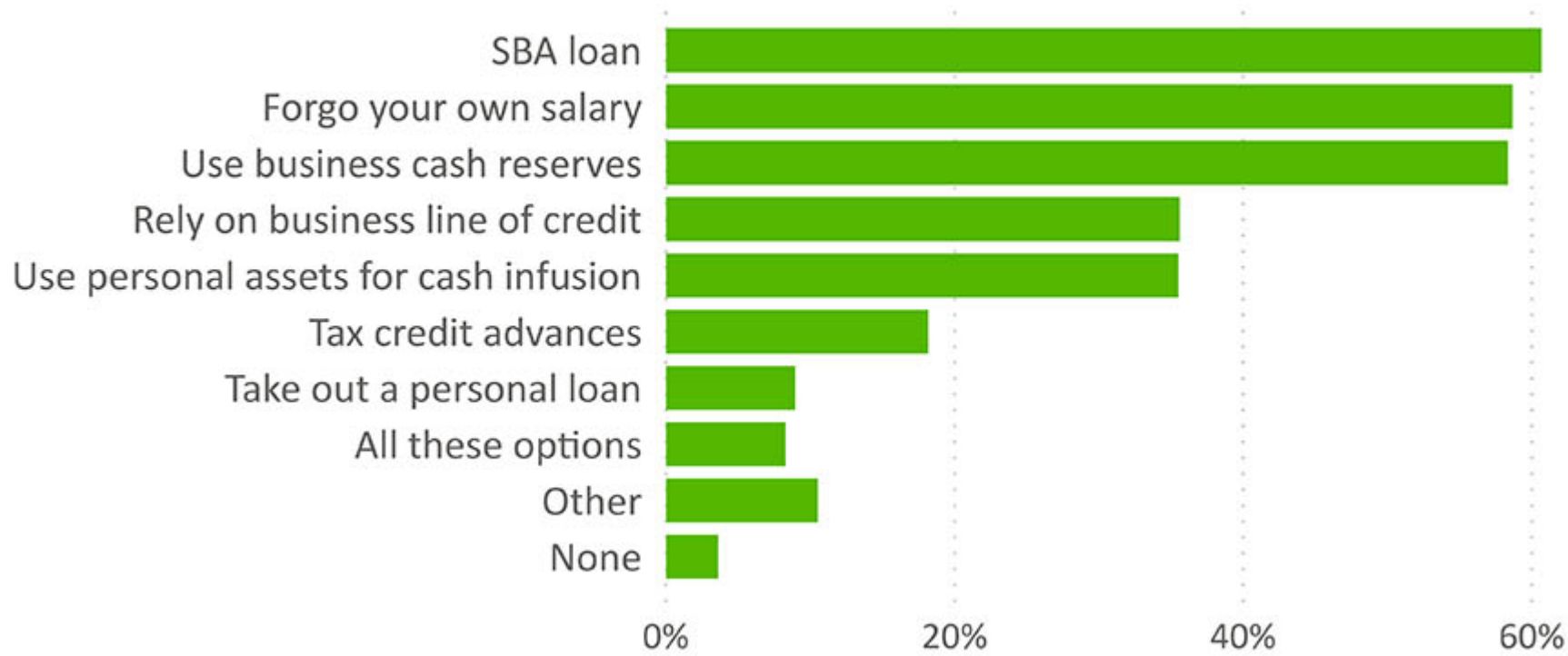
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The majority of practices--about 65%--estimated their cash shortfall to be less than 30% of average monthly revenue. About 20% of practices indicated a shortfall representing 30% of average monthly revenue, 25% indicated their cash shortfall represented 20% of monthly revenue, while 20% reported a 10% cash shortfall.

About half of all responding veterinary practices had seen client visits drop by 50% or less. Only about 5% of practices had stopped seeing clients completely.

BUSINESS STRATEGY

Cash shortfall strategies



To address cash shortfalls, more than 60% of respondents indicated they had applied or intended to apply for [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\) loan programs](#). This was the most common strategy reported to [maintain cash flow](#). About 60% of practice owners indicated they would forgo their own salary, and 60% said they would pull from business cash reserves. About 35% of respondents indicated they would rely on a business line of credit or use a personal asset to infuse cash into the practice.

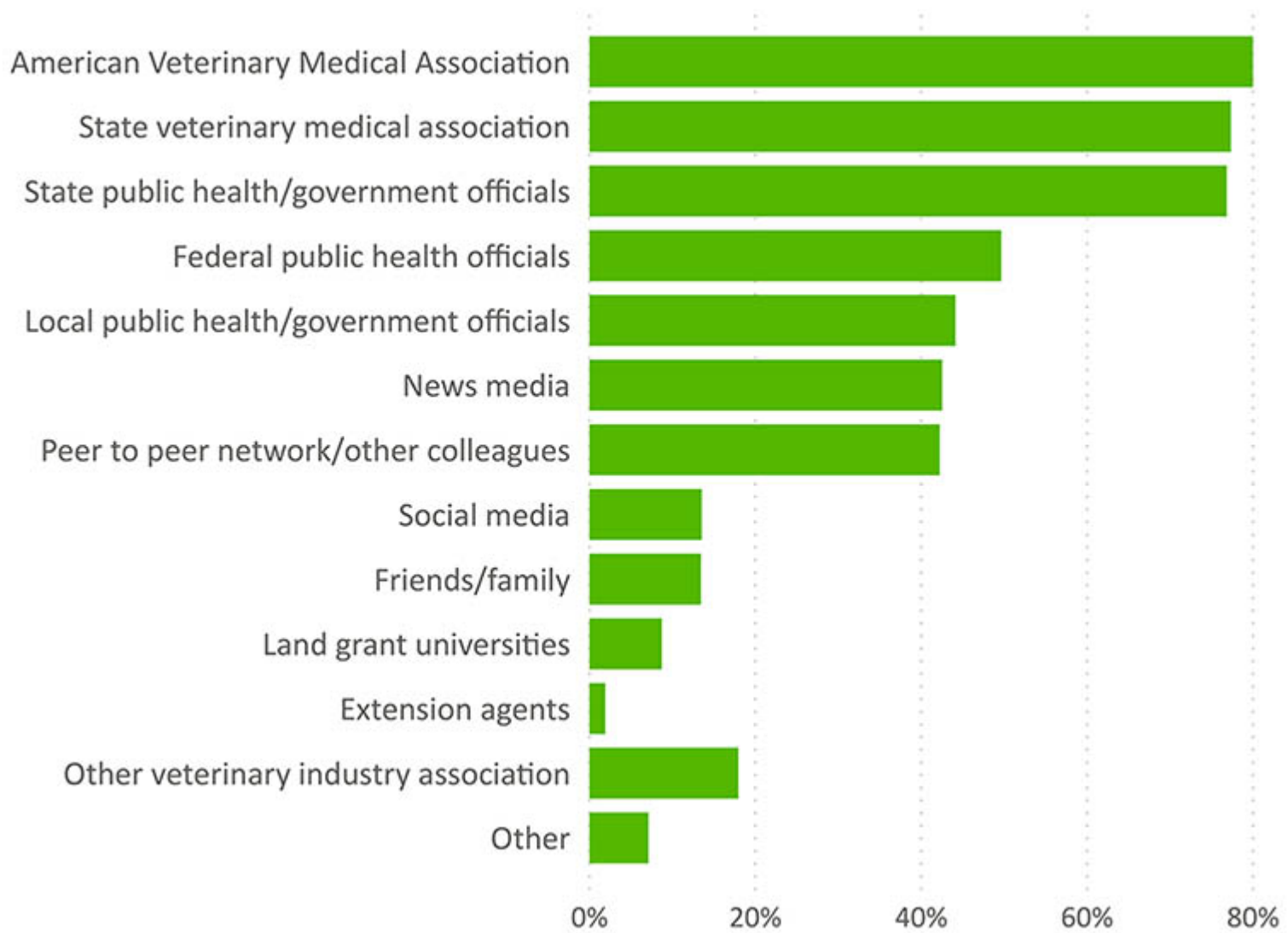
Over 75% of practices reported their clients had started buying pet food or medication online, likely in response to COVID-9. Of those, 73% of practices indicated clients had switched to buying online directly from the practice, and 23% said clients had switched to other online retailers (mostly Chewy, Pet Meds, and Amazon). 4% of practices reported having no online sales platform. For practices that don't provide online sales, doing so might help mitigate cash flow difficulties.

INFORMATION GATHERING

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Most relied on source of information



We also asked respondents where they are turning to get information about COVID-19, and 85% listed the AVMA as their most relied upon source of information. This was followed by state veterinary associations, and state public health and government websites. Ongoing efforts by trusted and reliable organizations to provide information and guidance will be critical as practices continue to navigate client needs and implement strategies to mitigate financial impact on their businesses.

Dig deeper

In all, we asked practices approximately 50 questions, ranging from when the practice first was impacted by COVID-19 to what clients are asking about, how practice costs and income have changed, how client traffic has dropped off, what activities and services have been canceled or are continuing, and much more. We've summarized all of the responses in charts and graphs [in a summary report](#), which shows the profession-wide impact of the pandemic in greater detail.



[Get the full survey report](#)

[Download key findings](#) ▶

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COVID-19 business strategy and economic impact

Learn how COVID-19 has impacted veterinary practices and economics, and find resources to help your business during the pandemic.

[Learn more](#)



COVID-19: Keeping veterinary teams healthy

Find guidance and best practices to keep veterinary team members healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Learn more](#)



Interactive maps: COVID-19 and the veterinary profession

The following maps present different lenses to view the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on veterinary medicine and veterinary professionals. They're interactive, allowing users to zoom in and out and hide or show specific data layers when more than one variable is shown.

[Learn more](#)



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