

## **Transport recommendations in COVID 19 emergency**

University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program, University of California-Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, The Association for Advancement of Animal Welfare, The Humane Society of the United States and The National Animal Control Association recommend animal control agencies and animal shelters follow the following recommendations for animal movement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every exception to social distancing decreases its efficacy.

Social distancing is the current strategy our nation has chosen to combat COVID 19. The hope is that by implementing social distancing we can avoid the collapse of our health care system in the short run by slowing the spread of disease and decreasing the rate of human patients in need of hospitalization and critical care. Our health care workers are putting themselves at great risk trying to care for the thousands of infected individuals presenting to hospitals each day. Social distancing puts our nation at substantial economic risk but has the intention of saving perhaps millions of human lives. Decreasing the efficacy of social distancing puts us all at risk of failing with our intervention to control disease while also jeopardizing our economy. The more stringent we are in our efforts at social distancing, the more likely the constraints on our activities will be released quickly and the fewer human and animal lives are likely to be lost.

While we have all invested our lives in preventing the loss of animal lives, we are called now to protect human life as well as animal lives, which means finding new ways to prevent euthanasia and promote care for animals in need. The key request coming from our governments and health advisors is for people to stay at home and limit travel.

Travel includes transport of animals from one community to another. While this type of animal movement has been an important approach to lifesaving for many organizations, continuing to transport animals increases the risk to human lives.

Travel for transport outside the immediate community of each shelter should be discontinued.

As an alternative, transfer between shelters in the same community and delivery for foster care or adoption is encouraged because it promotes live releases while maintaining recommended social distancing guidelines.

Be respectful of #safeathome orders in each state and municipality. While shelters and clinics have been identified as essential organizations, not every service or function of a shelter is essential. It is our obligation to reduce our activities.

When intake is decreased to emergencies only, the capacity to find a lifesaving outcome within the community is increased. This is why it is so essential to follow NACA guidelines for intake reduction and call response.