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BY EARTHQUAKES
VETERINARY ORCHESTRA
BOOSTING WELLBEING
FOR VETS

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Vets quickly adapting to pandemic conditions

Veterinarians in Australia were confirmed as an essential service in late March 2020 by the Federal Government as part of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the extent of the pandemic has continued to evolve and social distancing guidelines and other restrictions have been implemented, veterinary practices have quickly adapted to be able to continue providing veterinary care.

For those working in veterinary practices, frontline interactions with pet owners have meant implementing a range of procedures to protect both staff and clients. Perth veterinarian Dr Garry Edgar owner of Wembley Veterinary Hospital shares some of his experiences managing the changes in the workplace.

“We are evolving the strategies we are using, just like the rest of the community. We are quizzing clients about whether they have any of the known risk factors at each point of contact. We’ve also limited contact with clients by bringing pets out into the treatment room for clinical examinations away from the owners, and speaking to clients on the phone or at a safe distance,” said Dr Edgar.

“Staff communication has been a big area that we have worked on really early in the piece. I feel that staff are the biggest risk to other staff, as an industry we employ a lot of young women who are very social. We made it pretty clear at the outset that we wanted our team to think about reducing the risk of infecting their families or the rest of the team. This meant reducing social contact outside of the workplace and following social distancing guidelines”.

Veterinary practices have been adapting to the pandemic based on their individual circumstances, larger veterinary hospitals have divided their staff into teams to limit the potential for spread of any

illness. “I generally feel pretty energised as the team are really rising to the challenge and we haven’t experienced too much negativity. I’ve also been impressed that most of our clients have embraced the changes we have made too,” said Dr Edgar.

Psychologist Dr Nadine Hamilton, author of the book *Coping with Stress and Burnout as a Veterinarian*, shares some valuable advice for veterinarians experiencing anxiety or heightened stress during the pandemic. “Instead of focusing on all the negative thoughts and things that are outside of your control, put your energy into the things you can control. Practice gratitude for the things you do have,



Source: iStock

rather than getting caught in things you don't have," said Dr Hamilton.

With so much news and commentary available about the pandemic, Dr Hamilton recommends reducing time spent on social media, particularly if you find yourself constantly reading unhelpful and potentially inaccurate stories. Instead she suggests referring to reliable news sources, but in moderation.

Maintaining a healthy routine is also important as Dr Hamilton explains. "Try to keep your day structured - look after yourself by maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, engaging in relaxing, safe and healthy activities, immersing yourself in your hobbies, or maintaining social contact with friends, colleagues, and loved ones - but digitally if need be".

Dr Phil Tucak



Dr Garry Edgar owner of Wembley Veterinary Hospital



Source: iStock