

Coronavirus Guidance – Creating Systems of Prevention and Recovery to Deal with Potential Threats at Animal Sanctuaries and Rescue Centers

**GFAS accredited/verified groups needing immediate assistance creating or viewing a sample business continuity plan can contact valerie@sanctuaryfederation.org **

GFAS Standards require and emphasize the importance of disaster preparedness plans and protocols for sanctuaries, rescues, and rehabilitation centers. Disaster and contingency planning play an important role for animal facilities, in ensuring they can still operate during, and after, a major disruption, such as the current outbreak of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19):

Staff, Volunteers, and Visitor Programs

- Staff members and volunteer personnel should be educated on Coronavirus symptoms, transmission, and prevention. You can stay aware of the latest information on the outbreak through your national and local public health authority, and through the World Health Organization website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- Due to the essential nature of many animal caregiver positions, if you are not physically ill with respiratory or other symptoms, you will likely still report to work. As a part of disaster preparedness plans, sanctuaries should examine protocols addressing items such as telecommunicating for non-essential staff, leave policies, and direction for personnel who may have been exposed to the Coronavirus-directly or through a household member.
- Facilities which offer tours and visitor programs for the public should follow guidance from their local governmental and public health authorities, and may need to consider rescheduling, delaying, or cancelling activities.
- Handwashing and/or hand sanitizing stations should be located throughout the sanctuary and accessible to all personnel and visitors. You can view the CDC information about how to stop the spreading of germs [here](#).

Fundraising

- Decisions to delay or cancel visitor programs, conferences, and in-person fundraising events have real costs and implications for sanctuaries dependent on these sources of revenue. Personnel and Board members may need to adjust financial forecasts to account for any potential shortfall, and similarly look at making adjustments to curtail upcoming expenses, when possible.
- GFAS Standards require sanctuaries maintain operating reserves. It may be prudent for personnel and Boards to review policies surrounding the use of such funds to determine how much can be drawn down, and who is allowed to do this.

Coronavirus and Animals

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that those sick with COVID-19 should restrict contact with animals and pets until more information is known about the virus. Although not advised, if you must care for animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with animals and wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as a facemask and gloves.

Additional Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>

Print Resources (flyers and infographics to post and distribute at sanctuary facilities):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>