

## **Telemedicine in Veterinary Practice**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognizes the vital role veterinarians play in protecting public health and are providing guidance to expand the use of telemedicine for the care of animals while also allowing for social distancing to limit potential spread of COVID-19 in the community. The FDA announced that it intends to temporarily suspend enforcement of the animal examination and premise visit portion of the veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) requirements for specific situations including Extralabel Drug Use in Animals (ELDU) and Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) drugs. As such, veterinarians will be allowed to prescribe or authorize drugs for ELDU or VFD use without direct examination of the patients, which will limit human-to-human interaction and safeguard human health.

The beef cattle industry and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) is appreciative that FDA is allowing some flexibility in meeting animal health needs during this crisis. We recognize there are various circumstances where a group of animals, or individual animal, might need an exam in person and circumstances where telemedicine would suffice. A valid VCPR remains an important aspect to ensure the health and well-being of our cattle. NCBA, with guidance from the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP), recommends that cattle producers communicate with their veterinarian of record if medical attention is needed for their animals. The veterinarian of record will best determine if telemedicine is appropriate while also ensuring they are in compliance with state VCPR regulations. When telemedicine is appropriate, records should be kept just as with in-person exams.

If a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI or health certificate) is needed for animal transport, sale, or other reason, it should not be done via telemedicine. It is recommended that the veterinarian look at the animals on the CVI in person to perform any necessary regulatory tests and ensure animals are healthy and free of any evidence of contagious disease. This is to ensure the continued health of our national cattle herd and abide by state and national animal health and transportation requirements.

To meet the needs of animals during this crisis, telemedicine can be considered by the veterinarian of record for individual or herd-based assessments. For more information about telemedicine and how veterinarians may utilize it to protect and monitor animal health, please visit [AVMA.org/coronavirus](https://www.avma.org/coronavirus).