



AKVMA
E | info@akvma.org
T | 907.205.4272

December 24, 2020

Re: Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine During Phase 1b

Dear DHHS Vaccine Task Force and Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed CDC priorities for distributing COVID-19 vaccines. These comments are on behalf of the Alaska State Veterinary Medical Association (AKVMA). AKVMA is a professional organization of veterinarians committed to helping protect the health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans, advocating for veterinarians to provide safe, competent professional veterinary services to consumers, and supporting scientifically based regulations that support these goals.

The AKVMA respectfully requests that veterinarians and veterinary staff be included as a recipient group during Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Veterinarians and veterinary staff have and will continue to provide essential critical infrastructure health services during this pandemic. As essential health care workers, veterinarians participate in safeguarding our food animal supply and ensuring the health of our pets, consequently protecting the public against the spread of zoonotic diseases.

Veterinarians contribute directly to supporting agricultural industries, providing services that are considered essential. In addition to providing critical support for the sufficiency and safety of our nation's food supply, veterinarians also help ensure the health and wellbeing of the pets that share our homes. Those pets have played an important role in supporting their owners' physical and mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

Most veterinarians have not been able to work from home, some own mobile clinics or perform house calls, all interacting with the public and their pets daily, placing us at risk of exposure. Although the veterinary profession has been creative in implementing important risk management controls during the pandemic, maintaining physical distance from our clients and staff members can be difficult when handling animals or performing medical procedures. While ensuring animals receive appropriate care, veterinarians are regularly exposed to members of the public who are symptomatically or asymptotically ill. In addition to increased exposure,

veterinary professionals and staff routinely protect animal and public health through monitoring for different zoonotic diseases such as rabies, tularemia, leptospirosis, etc.

While the decisions for the distribution plan of the COVID-19 vaccine are extremely complex, the range of operations and services that veterinarians provide are essential and critical to public health. Due to the nature of services veterinarians provide, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to socially distance in the work environment. For these reasons, it is vital that veterinarians and their staff be included in Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "McKayla Dick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

McKayla Dick, DVM
President
Alaska Veterinary State Veterinary Medical Association

“Promoting excellence and professionalism of Alaska Veterinarians in advancing the health and well-being of animals and the public.”