

## Use telemedicine to help care for veterinary patients

With intensifying concern around COVID-19, use of telemedicine has become an important way to protect and monitor the health of veterinary patients and veterinary teams. Using telemedicine can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, because it allows veterinary patients to be appropriately triaged with only those veterinary patients that really need to be seen making the trip to the clinic along with their owners. Certain things are required for the use of telemedicine, of course: an already established [veterinarian-client-patient relationship](#) and an appropriate patient presentation. AVMA has resources to support your use of telemedicine at [avma.org/Telemedicine](https://www.avma.org/Telemedicine).

## Tax Credits Included in Coronavirus Paid Leave Law

**A critical part of coronavirus (COVID-19) mitigation plans is making sure sick people stay home. But workers who are afraid of missing a paycheck might not take off work if they are ill. So, to alleviate that fear, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which President Trump signed on March 18, 2020, forces many employers to provide paid sick and family leave for workers affected by the virus. However, to shift most of the financial burden for paid leave off the employer's back, tax credits are also available to reimburse employers for some of the cost. Self-employed people who can't work because of the coronavirus get tax credits, too.**

**The new law does not include a payroll tax cut, stimulus checks, or other tax relief provisions. However, Congress and the Trump administration are already working on another coronavirus stimulus bill that could include additional tax law changes. For now, though, here are the basics on the paid leave benefits and related tax credits found in the new law.**

## Paid Leave Benefits

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act requires private employers with fewer than 500 workers and all public employers to provide paid sick leave to employees affected by the coronavirus (exceptions for health care providers, emergency responders and certain small businesses are allowed). Full-time workers get up to 80 hours of sick leave, while part-time workers get sick leave for the average number of hours they work over a two-week period. A worker is only able to take paid leave if he or she is:

- Subject to a federal, state or local coronavirus quarantine or isolation order;
- Advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to coronavirus concerns;
- Experiencing coronavirus symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis;
- Caring for someone else who is subject to a coronavirus-related federal, state or local quarantine or isolation order, or who has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to coronavirus-related concerns;
- Caring for a son or daughter if the child's school or daycare has been closed, or the child's care provider is unavailable, due to coronavirus precautions; or

- Experiencing any other substantially similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.
  - Workers who are sick or quarantined get full pay while on coronavirus leave, up to \$511 per day (\$5,110 in total). Workers caring for another person or on leave because of an HHS-specified condition get two-thirds of their normal pay while on leave, up to \$200 per day (\$2,000 in total).
  - The new law also extends the existing Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to cover a worker's absence (including an inability to telework) to care for a minor son or daughter if the child's school or daycare has been closed, or the child's care provider is unavailable, because of the coronavirus.
  - Workers receive two-thirds of their regular salary while on coronavirus-related FMLA leave, but compensation is capped at \$200 per day and \$10,000 in total. However, this leave does not kick in until after 10 days. (During that time, workers are presumably able to take sick leave as described above.)
  - The expanded FMLA provisions apply to employers with fewer than 500 employees, but not to certain health care providers and emergency responders. Exemptions are also available for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees if the new requirements jeopardize the business's viability.
  - Any wages paid as coronavirus sick or family leave aren't subject to Social Security (or Railroad Retirement) payroll taxes paid by employers.

## Tax Credits for Employers

While employers initially have to foot the bill for the new sick and family leave benefits, at least some of the costs are paid back through refundable tax credits against the 6.2% Social Security (or Railroad Retirement) payroll tax imposed on employers. The credits are, however, subject to certain restrictions and limitations.

For the new sick leave benefits, the credit is limited to \$511 per day for workers taking leave because they are sick or quarantined. The limit is \$200 per day for workers taking leave to care for another person or on leave because of an HHS-specified condition. The credit is further reduced by a 10-sick-days-per-worker limit.

For the expanded FMLA benefits, the credit is limited to \$200 per day, per employee. The credit also can't exceed \$10,000 in total for any worker.

Employers are also given additional payroll tax credits for group health plan costs for, and the 1.45% Medicare payroll tax on wages paid to, workers on coronavirus sick or family leave.

## Tax Credits for Self-Employed

Self-employed people are not left out in the cold. They receive refundable tax credits against the self-employment tax that are similar to those allowed for employers.

The sick leave credit is based on a self-employed person's "qualified sick leave equivalent amount." That amount is equal to (1) up to 10 days during the year that the person can't

work for a reason that would entitle them to coronavirus-related sick leave if he or she were an employee, (2) multiplied by the lesser of:

- \$511 per day for people who are sick or quarantined, or \$200 per day for people caring for another person or on leave because of an HHS-specified condition; or
- 100% of a sick or quarantined person's average daily self-employment income for the year, or 67% of the average daily self-employment income for a person caring for another person or on leave because of an HHS-specified condition.

A self-employment tax credit is also be available for 100% of a person's "qualified family leave equivalent amount." That amount is equal to (1) up to 50 days during the year that the person can't work for a reason that would entitle them to coronavirus-related family leave if he or she were an employee, (2) multiplied by the lesser of:

- \$200; or
- 67% of the person's average daily self-employment income for the year.

## Other Business considerations

Coordination with [state](#) and [local](#) health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

Other resources include:

The [coronavirus response business toolkit](#): The U.S. Chamber of Commerce put together a toolkit to help businesses and citizens alike understand how to navigate the coronavirus. There are guidelines on how small business owners can ensure they are keeping their customers and employees safe. The toolkit also includes a business preparedness checklist. This checklist can help you figure out what to prioritize and create a plan of communication for your employees.

[Disaster assistance loans](#) from the SBA: The Small Business Administration (SBA) announced it would offer disaster assistance loans for up to \$2 million for small businesses affected by the coronavirus. These low-interest loans are available to businesses that have sustained “substantial economic injury” due to the spread of the coronavirus. These loans can be used to pay off outstanding debts, payroll and any other bills they are unable to pay. While small businesses that have access to credit are not eligible, those small businesses with no available credit qualify for an interest rate of 3.75%, and nonprofits will have an interest rate of 2.75%.

[Disaster Help Desk](#) for small businesses: The U.S. Chamber Foundation has a disaster help desk that acts as an information concierge to assist small businesses with disaster readiness, relief, and long-term recovery. They also have a business resiliency toolbox with resources to help guide companies to address preparedness issues while building in flexibility to handle potential business interruptions.

## **IRS Issues Notice 2020-17**

The IRS has issued Notice 2020-17 extending the tax payment deadline. This deadline applies to both 2019 balance-due payments and 2020 estimated income tax payments that are due April 15, 2020. This payment deadline is extended until July 15, 2020.

This extension applies only to federal income tax payments (including payments of tax on self-employment income due April 15).

Important: The due date for filing tax returns has not been extended and remains April 15.

## **Veterinary Continuing Education**

SCAV has asked the SC Veterinary Medical Examiners Board to count CE that was canceled because of COVID-19 as in person if it is made available virtually. The March 15 academy online presentations should be edited and ready very soon.