



Thank you for scheduling an appointment for your pet with the VNC. We are dedicated to making sure that your pet will continue to receive the same high-quality medical care they deserve despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNC has implemented protocols to ensure that you, your family, your pet, our team members, and their families are kept as safe as possible while still providing excellent communication, medical expertise, and exceptional care for your beloved family member. These include:

- New cleaning protocols.
- Completing Patient Registration online.
- Wearing face masks.
- Minimizing contact amongst clients and team members.
- Clients remaining outside of the clinic.
- New ways to interact with doctors and team members.

While some pet owners may see these precautions as excessive, please know that for our clients', team members', and the public's safety (especially for those who are at high risk) we feel these are the best policies given the current situation. [This document is meant to give an overview of our current policies and other important information to keep in mind](#) for your pet's upcoming appointment. Please let us know ahead of time if you have any questions or concerns so that we can ensure your visit is as safe as possible.

## Cleaning/Sanitation Protocols

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The following steps have been implemented to ensure that there is not cross-contamination exposure to the virus from surfaces that clients and team members come in to contact with:

- **Cleaning Surfaces/Objects:** Any surface or object that a client or team member comes in contact with will be cleaned with the disinfectant Rescue. The active ingredient in Rescue is accelerated hydrogen peroxide which has been shown to be effective at killing SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Our cleaning protocol is as follows:
  - Surfaces inside and outside the clinic are sprayed down with disinfectant at the beginning of the day, after client use, and periodically throughout the day.
  - Disinfectant is allowed to sit for 5-10 minutes for maximum viricidal efficacy.
  - Surface is sprayed down again and wiped dry with a clean hand towel with team member wearing gloves and mask.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** Due to the shortage of hand sanitizer the VNC makes our own hand sanitizer according to the [WHO \(World Health Organization\) protocol/formulation](#). Hand sanitizer will be available in the following ways:
  - Bottle provided to client in client areas and sanitized between uses.
  - Automatic dispensers inside clinic by doorways. To be used by team members and clients when they enter the clinic to use the restroom.
- **Door Handle Signs:** Signs have been placed on either side of each doorway in the clinic with a reminder to wash hands or use hand sanitizer after use to help minimize spread via contact with door handles. The door handles are also regularly sanitized.
- **Team Member Temperatures:** In an effort to catch any possible signs of illness early, VNC team members take their temperatures every morning before the beginning of their shift. If a team member is noted to have a temperature of 100.5° F or higher, they will be sent home, asked to self-isolate, and to seek COVID-19 testing as soon as is possible. If the disease is confirmed, then further measures will be taken to mitigate the disease.

## Online Patient Registration Requirement

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In order to minimize direct contact between clients and team members, avoid possible cross-contamination from physical paper registration forms, and expedite the check-in process, please fill out our [Online Registration Form](#) before you arrive for your appointment.

## Face Mask Requirement

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In order to minimize possible spread of the virus via respiratory droplets the VNC is requiring all clients and team members to wear face masks at all times while at the clinic and outside when communicating to one another. This is because respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, exhalation, talking, etc. can travel further than 6ft. and face masks help prevent their dispersion. If you do not have a mask of your own, the VNC will provide you with one. In order to preserve personal protective equipment for health care providers on the front lines:

- The face masks are made by VNC team members based on [University of Florida design](#).
- They are steam sterilized in an autoclave at 270° F prior to dissemination to a client.
- In order to avoid direct contact, masks are placed on a sanitized tray by a team member wearing gloves and a mask.

If you have any concerns about wearing a mask, please contact us prior to your appointment so that accommodations can be made.

## Meeting Remotely Outside

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Aside from requiring masks, one of the most noticeable changes to our protocols is that the VNC team members will meet clients outside the clinic only, with the exception of those that need to use the restroom. The doctor will then be meeting the client for their appointment remotely via an iPad using the meeting application Zoom. The following process will happen when you arrive for your appointment:

- **Call VNC:** To let us know that you have arrived for your appointment, confirm the make/model of the car you have arrived in to identify where you are in the parking lot, and let us know if you need a mask.
- **Team Member Brings iPad:** A team member will come to your car and provide you with a face mask (if necessary) and an iPad.
- **Meet with Client Service Representative:** A Client Service Representative will then meet with you remotely via the iPad and discuss the check-in process (see Interaction via Zoom below).
- **Technician Performs Pet Exchange** (see corresponding section below): A technician will then come out to perform a hands-free exchange of your pet so that your pet can be examined inside the clinic by the neurology doctor.
- **Meet with Doctor:** The doctor will then meet with you during or after the exam of your pet to discuss history, exam findings, and recommendations for the next best step.

## Interaction via Zoom

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As one of the best preventative measures for COVID-19 is social distancing the VNC has instituted a system to allow for all interaction with the doctor, and most of the interaction with other team members, to be done digitally via an iPad that will be provided to you when you arrive for your appointment. The VNC will be utilizing the video conferencing application Zoom to conduct these interactions. The following are important details to keep in mind regarding this system:

- **Park Near Front Entrance:** Please park as close to our front entrance as possible. This is to ensure the iPad provided has a strong Wi-Fi connection. This is done to prevent any potential issues such as lag in video and audio or loss of connection to the video/audio stream.
- **Using the iPad:** An iPad will be provided to you by a Client Service Representative when you arrive along with a mask. The following are important details about the iPad provided to you:
  - **Zoom Meeting Will be Started For You:** the Zoom meeting/video conference will already be started when the iPad is provided to you so that you do not have to worry about opening and connecting to the video conference yourself.
  - **Disposable Covers Used:** Disposable covers may be used on the iPads to help minimize cross-contamination. iPads are also disinfected after each use.
  - **Avoid Direct Sunlight:** Please avoid placing the iPad in direct sunlight as this may cause the iPad to overheat and power down as a result.
  - **Adding Participants:** If there are additional family members, co-owners, etc. that wish to participate in the video conference, but are not present, we can assist in adding them as additional participants in the video conference.
- **Web-Cam and Neurological Exam Issues:** The doctor may or may not perform the neurological exam on video due to the webcam's limited field of view. If the exam is not filmed, then the doctor will meet with you following the exam to discuss his/her findings and recommendations.



## Contact Free Patient Exchange

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In order to adhere to social distancing protocols, the VNC has developed methods that will allow for you to exchange your pet with a team member so that he/she can be brought into our clinic without any direct contact. We ask that you use these methods rather than handing your pet directly to a team member for everyone's safety. The following are the methods we will be available to you:

- **Tie-Down Stake:** An animal tie-down stake has been placed in the front of the clinic. **If your pet is a medium to large breed dog and is able to stand and walk on their own, this is the preferred method.** You will:
  - Either connect your leash to the stake or will be provided a leash from the VNC to attach to the stake.
  - You will then back up and our team member will approach the stake and disconnect your pet and bring them inside the clinic.
  - The reverse will occur when your pet is returned to you following their appointment and/or hospital stay.
- **Exercise Pen:** An exercise pen will be set up in front of the clinic as well as on the patio on the back of the clinic. **If your pet is a small dog and/or is unable to stand and walk on their own, this is the preferred method.** You will:
  - Place your pet in the exercise pen, there will be blankets/bedding in the pen to make it comfortable for your pet.
  - You will then back up and the team member will pick up your pet to bring them inside the clinic.
  - The reverse will occur when your pet is returned to you following their appointment and/or hospital stay. Bedding will be changed between patients to prevent any cross-contamination between pets, clients, and team members.
- **Pet Carrier:** If you have a pet carrier for your pet, you may use it for the exchange, **this method is essential for cats**, especially those that can still walk and stand. This is also suitable for small and medium dogs. When using a pet carrier:
  - Bring the carrier outside of your vehicle and place on the ground.
  - Back up from the carrier and the team member will approach it.
  - Team member will disinfect handle and surrounding area and then bring carrier and pet into clinic.
  - Pet will be returned in fully disinfected carrier after appointment or hospital stay.

## Accommodations Outside

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As clients are being asked to wait outside, we are doing our best to ensure that you are comfortable during your appointment. Feel free to call us at [\(602\)437-1488](tel:6024371488), before or during your appointment if you have any questions or concerns and we will do our best to accommodate you. If you need assistance while onsite, you may also let the Client Service Representative who is assisting you know about your questions or concerns via Zoom or in-person. The following accommodations will be available to you while you are waiting and/or during your appointment:

- **Staying Cool:** You are welcome to remain in your car for the duration of your time at the VNC. **If you opt for this, please be sure that you have good air conditioning in your car and that you will not run the risk of overheating in the parking lot**, especially during the summer. Please let us know if any questions or concerns arise that we can assist you with.
- **Tent:** In the front of the clinic there is a tent set up with a table and chairs to provide a shaded area for clients. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns arise while onsite and we will accommodate you as best we can.

- **Patio:** In the back of the clinic the VNC has a covered patio that was recently remodeled and is available for clients with tables and chairs set up. The patio will be divided so that two clients can be present at once while maintaining safe social distance. **There are evaporative coolers with fans to help further mitigate the heat during summer.** If you have questions or concerns at any time, please let us know so that we can address them.
- **Coolers for Clients:** On the tables under the tents or on the patio there will be coolers set out for clients. These coolers contain snacks as well as bottled water for you and your pet.
  - If you need more water or snacks, please feel free to take from another cooler, use the iPad, or call [\(602\)437-1488](tel:(602)437-1488) to request more water/snacks or to relay any other questions or concerns you may have and we will do our best to accommodate you.
  - If you opt to wait in your car, still feel free to hop out and grab a water/snack from an unused cooler as our team will have coolers set up for clients regardless if they are in their car, under the tents, or on the patio.
  - **Please leave the lid open on the cooler after use** to indicate to our team and other clients that the cooler has been used. Coolers will be disinfected after each use.
- **Using the Restroom:** Although clients are asked to stay outside during their appointment, **we will allow you to come inside the building when you need to use our restroom.** Please let a team member know if you need to use the restroom. Feel free to call us at [\(602\)437-1488](tel:(602)437-1488) to alert us that you need to use the restroom so we can ensure the restroom is empty thus minimizing the number that are inside the clinic. Please wear a face mask at all times inside of the building.

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Thank you for entrusting your pet's care to us and being understanding during this difficult time. Again, please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Together we can ensure a safe environment for you and all of our clients and team members while still providing all pets and pet owners the same excellent service and medical care they deserve. We look forward to seeing you and your pet at your upcoming appointment.

***– The Doctors and Support Team at the VNC***