



COVID-19 AND THE DELIVERY OF VETERINARY CARE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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A Little Bit About Me

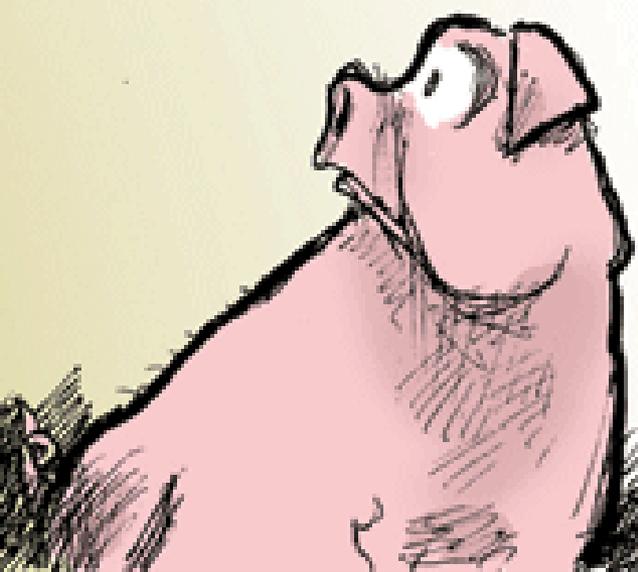
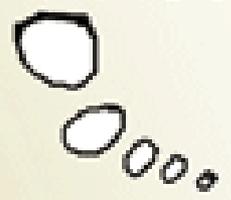
- Grew up on a livestock and grain farm in Southeast Iowa
- Attended Iowa State University for undergrad and vet school
- Spent time in various veterinary roles
 - Pig and small animal practitioner
 - Regulatory and industry veterinarian in Indiana
 - Public policy veterinarian in Washington, DC
 - Handled many public health issues
 - Helped shape policy during the H1N1 pandemic

Today's Presentation

- H1N1 pandemic policy
- COVID-19 and veterinary medicine
 - The delivery of care
 - Changes to how we practice
 - Challenges in veterinary medicine created by the pandemic
 - Clients' perception of care for their animal family members
- COVID-19 vaccine and the veterinary profession
- CDC data on new and emerging diseases



MAN!
I SURE,
HOPE IT'S
NOT
CONTAGIOUS!!!



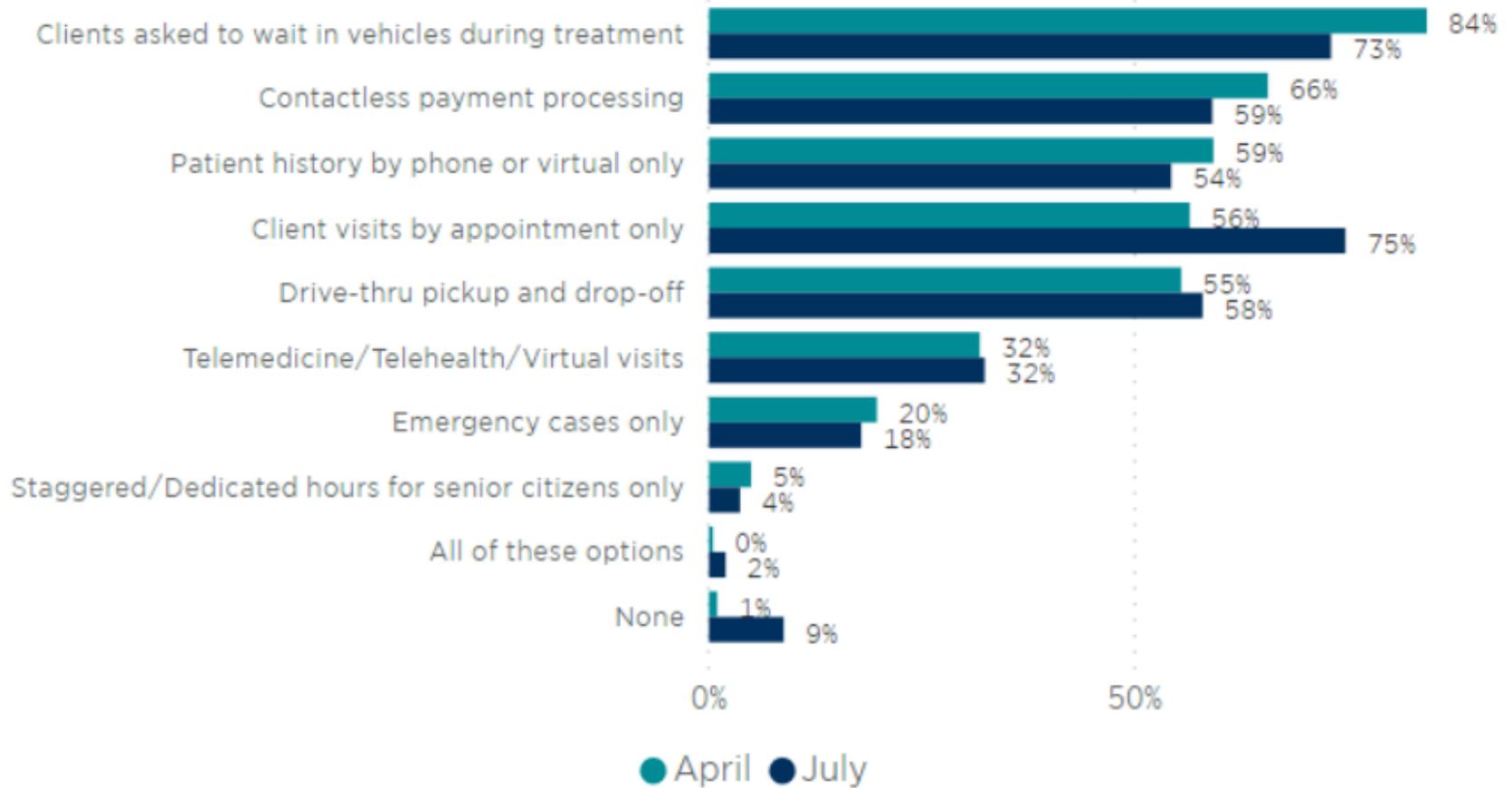
The H1N1 Pandemic Had Pigs At Ground Zero.

- Was thought to have started on a pig farm in Mexico
- Industry input moved the response plan from quarantine and test to monitored movement using clinical observations for movement
- Farmers and their employees with influenza-like illness need to stay away from pigs
- ARS research
 - Study found that live H1N1 was only detected in the respiratory tract
 - Virus does not spread to meat, confirming that pork from infected and recovered pigs was safe to eat
- No mask wearing and no interrupted travel

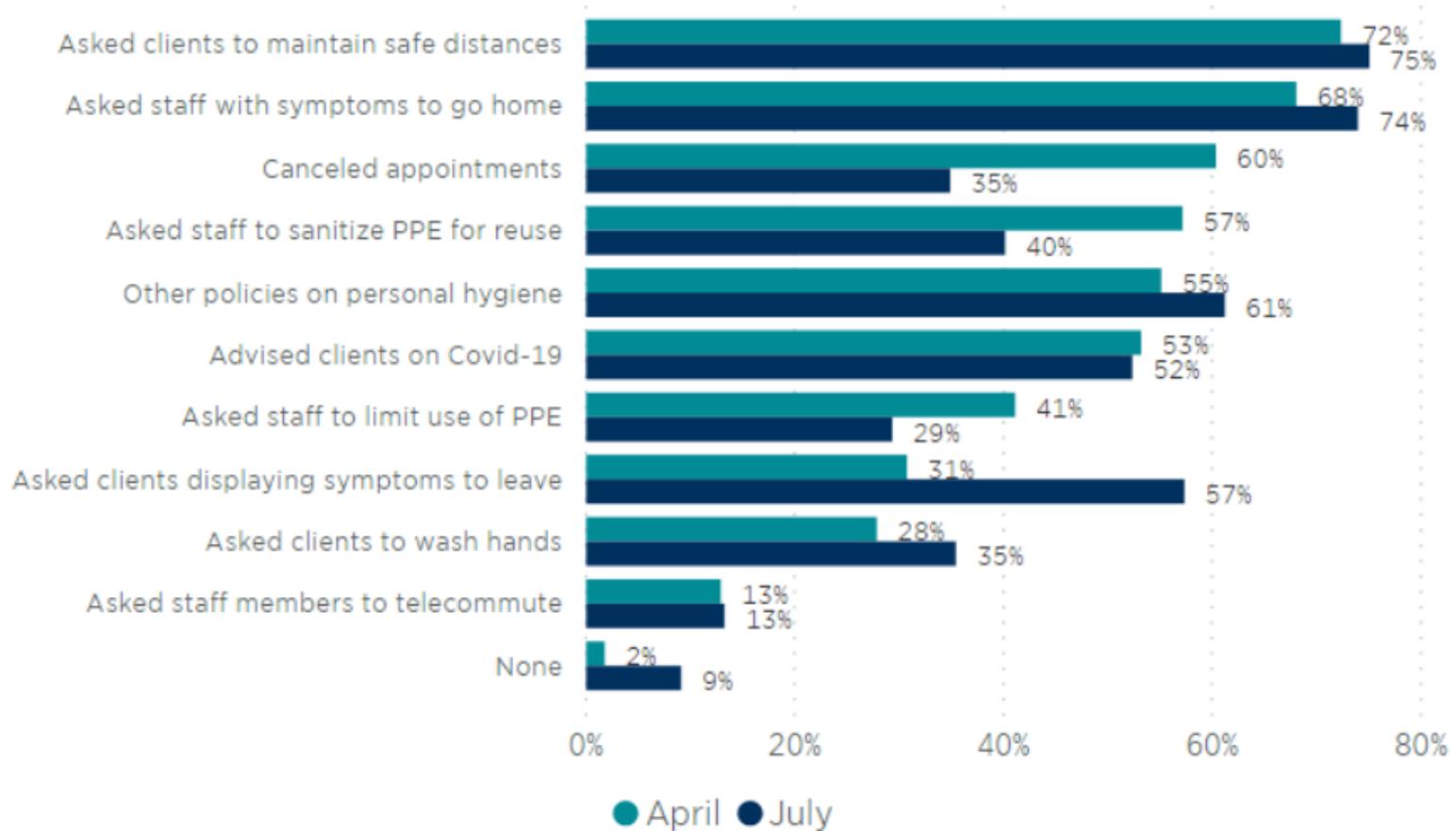
AVMA's Members Survey

- Two surveys of practice owners in April and July 2020 to better understand how COVID-19 affected veterinary practices
- Collected over 3,500 responses representing different practice sizes, types and species
- Covered many topics but focus today will be operational strategies and precautionary measures

Operational strategies



Precautionary measures



SARS-CoV-2, The Pandemic And Our Response in 2020

- Saturday, April 4th
 - Masks for employees per change in CDC guidance
 - No changes for clients
- Monday, April 13th
 - Separated staff into two teams (2 doctors, 3 technicians)
 - Locked the front door
 - Masked required for entry
 - No elective procedures or appointments
 - No Saturday appointments



***FACE COVERINGS
ARE REQUIRED IN
BUILDING***

***ONE person in the
building per visit***

**Thank you for being considerate
of our safety & yours!**

SARS-CoV-2, The Pandemic And Our Response in 2020

- Significant push-back from clients
 - Were not going to school/office so they wanted elective procedures and appointments
 - Added some elective appointments and procedures
- Monday, May 4th
 - Increased to 3 doctors, 4 technicians
 - Added more procedures
- Monday, May 11th
 - Back to fully staffed
 - Doors unlocked
 - Masks required for clients
 - One client per appointment
- Saturday, May 30th

We Elected NOT To Go Curbside.

- Did not believe curbside service decreased the risk to our staff
 - Staff member retrieving pet was sacrificial lamb
 - Clients sick with SARS-CoV-2 could still bring pets to curbside clinics
- Liability concerns
 - Pets getting away from staff in parking lot
 - Pets not wanting to leave their owners' cars
 - Bite wounds

We Elected NOT To Go Curbside.

- Communication concerns
 - Is the veterinary team getting all the information to make an accurate diagnosis?
 - Does the client understand the diagnosis?
- Clients appreciated being in the exam room with their pets
 - One traveled from MSP
 - New clients because they could enter
- Offered curbside appointments if the client wanted
- Asked clients to wait in car until exam rooms were ready

SARS-CoV-2, The Pandemic And Our Response in 2021

- Late Thursday, May 14th
 - CDC changes mask recommendation for vaccinated people
 - Significant push-back on masks on Saturday morning
 - Survey of employees → Split a 1/3, a 1/3 and a 1/3
- Monday, May 24th
 - Change to our policy on masks
 - Do we trust our clients?



**ONE person per appt.
Fully vaccinated – mask is
optional.
If not, masks are required.
Two people in appt. masks
ARE required.**

**Thank you for being considerate
of our safety & yours!**

What You Heard About Vet Med May Not Be True.

- Despite news reports of many pet adoptions in 2020, actual data from animal shelters show fewer pet adoptions in 2020 compared to the last 5 years
- Practices report more business than before the pandemic, yet national data on average number of visits to practices is flat to trending down (according to Veterinary Industry Tracker powered by AVMA and VetSuccess)

COVID Changes Affected Productivity

- Busyness in practices largely attributed to decrease in staff productivity, not an increase in visits
 - 25% decrease in number of patients seen per hour
 - According to AVMA Practice Owner Survey
- Negative impact to productivity caused by COVID-19 and the adaptations needed to provide quality care to patients
 - Staff members exposed or sick
 - Curbside takes longer

We Need To Work On Employee Turnover and QOL.

- High employee turnover (especially veterinary technicians)
 - Creates feeling of tight labor market
 - Creates difficult situation for employee recruitment and retention
- Quality of life (QOL)
 - 1 in 6 veterinarians have contemplated suicide
 - Veterinarians 2.7x more liable than general public to die from suicide
- Addressing our workforce challenges
 - Improve labor productivity
 - Reduce employee turnover
 - Remove stigma of burnout

When People Have More Money, Their Pets Benefit.

- Disposable income business
 - Clients had more disposable income during the pandemic
 - Pets received more preventive care (i.e., blood panels, dental cleanings, heartworm/flea/tick prevention)
- Profit in agriculture impacts our business
 - Ranchers/farmers more likely to repair broken limbs
 - Will make the investment in the health of their “farm hand”

My Clients' Perceptions Are My Reality.

- Perceptions of pets have changed in the last twenty years
 - Sleep in bed with the humans
 - Dog parents
 - Pet is some clients' only companion
 - Standard of care has increased
- Telemedicine
 - Video exams
 - Communicating through Email and text messages
 - How are we compensated for the exam and time?

Will The Demand Continue?

- Is the demand cyclical or more permanent?
- Will the clients who came because they could come into the building continue coming to our practice?
- When clients return to more normal routines, will veterinary care and their pets be top of mind?
- As money is spent on other family needs, will clients continue to spend money on their pets?
- Will clients expect virtual visits and telemedicine?

COVID-19 Vaccine And Veterinary Medicine

- AVMA lobbied for veterinary health professionals and team members to be included in Class 1b
 - In CDC's Vaccination Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations Phase 1b included:
 - People who play key roles in keeping essential functions of society running and cannot socially distance in the workplace
 - People who are at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness
- In South Dakota, veterinary health professionals were placed in Class 1e with agriculture
- Veterinarians keep the economic engine of our communities running, and there is no social distancing in the exam room or in retrieving a pet from a vehicle.

Our Worlds Will Continue To Intersect.

- From CDC:
 - 60% of known infectious diseases in people can be spread from animals
 - 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals
- Veterinarians know how to manage new and emerging diseases and disease outbreaks.
- We need to continue having this meeting and working together to solve new and emerging diseases for all of our patients.

The Last Year Was A Little Like Professional School.

- We couldn't take trips when we wanted.
- We had others telling us what to do.
- We had to stay home while others went out.
- Our schedules were determined by others.
- We buckled down and finished because that was all we could do.
- The discipline from veterinary college helped us navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Any Questions?

