

Animal shelters in the Kawarthas limit access during coronavirus outbreak

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When it comes to social distancing, there is a part of society that has no idea what this is, or how to do it; granted they also have four legs.

Across Ontario, animal shelters, including those in Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough, have significantly reduced services or shut their doors completely in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While research is still being done, and it is possible that some types of animals could be infected with COVID-19, the Canadian Veterinary Association says there is no evidence it can be spread by pets or other animals.

The shelters' actions are meant to reduce the impact on visitors and potential adoptive families.

To this end, the Humane Society of Kawartha Lakes says it has had to suspend or limit certain operations. Staff has been reduced at the Lindsay-based shelter and only select volunteers are caring for the animals. Extra measures have been added to daily cleaning routines.

The Kawartha Lakes shelter is taking surrenders, adoptions and accepting stray and abandoned animals by appointment only.

Staff ask that anyone experiencing coronavirus symptoms — including fever and/or onset of cough or flu-like symptoms — or who have travelled outside of Canada and/or come in contact with someone who has, or is presumed to have, COVID-19, to not visit.

Food purchases and use of the shelter's pet food bank can be done by calling in advance for pick up. Delivery is not available. Those wishing to donate items, such as litter, cleaning supplies and other items, are asked to call ahead. Financial donations can be made online at www.hskl.ca.

The shelter has closed its Second Chance thrift store, which is an important fundraising venue. People are asked to not leave donations outside.

The Peterborough Humane Society is also closed, with adoptions by appointment, but the Safe Nights for Pets (SNooPY) and owner surrender programs are on hold.

But even if the doors are closed, there are still plenty of ways people can help, says executive director Shawn Morey.

“Many of our supporters are reaching out to lend a helping hand and we are immensely grateful to have such a caring community,” he states.

Suggestions include:

- Support local pet food banks
- Check in on neighbours with pets, especially seniors
- Adopt a pet using the time at home to help them settle in
- Keep kids busy by having them make some pet toys at home.

For more ongoing information regarding what is happening at local animal shelters, visit the Kawartha Lakes Humane Society, Peterborough Humane Society Animal Services and Lakefield Animal Welfare Society at www.hskl.ca, www.peterboroughhumanesociety.ca and www.lakefieldanimalwelfare.org respectively.