

An open letter to vets to mark World Vet Day.

News story

The Environment Secretary writes to those working in the veterinary profession, to thank them for the part they are playing at this time.



Photo Credit BVA.

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to thank you for the part you, and the wider veterinary profession, are playing in our fight against what is perhaps the greatest health challenge this country has faced in our lifetime.

The Government has taken some unprecedented steps to ask people to stay at home, to protect our NHS and save lives. The more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal.

Our success in responding to, and recovering from, the outbreak will come from all of us working together. It has been so encouraging to see many fantastic examples of this across many sectors and groups, including the veterinary profession. As you may know, today marks World Vet Day, so I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your profession for playing your part. Your willingness and support in providing critical veterinary equipment to the NHS for medical use has helped individuals, their families, and our fantastic health colleagues.

I know for the veterinary profession, the COVID-19 outbreak has its own specific pressures. Every animal you see has a person linked with it. I appreciate that, in responding to urgent animal health and welfare issues, you are dealing with a number of challenges: respecting social distancing, finding new ways of working at speed including tele-consultations and responding to clients' worries and expectations – your work is vital. This is why I and my Government colleagues are enormously thankful for all the work that you have done in recent weeks, and will continue to do in the weeks

ahead.

Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Published 26 April 2020

[Mobile coronavirus testing units to target frontline workers](#)

- Units will respond to areas of highest demand, travelling to test frontline workers and the most vulnerable at sites including care homes, police stations and prisons
- The new units will work alongside the country's drive-through test sites, sending patient samples to the network of Lighthouse Labs, to rapidly increase the number of tests done each day

Essential workers and the most vulnerable will receive increased access to coronavirus tests after the government unveiled a network of mobile testing units to travel where there is significant demand, including care homes, police stations and prisons.

The number of new mobile units is being scaled up after a successful pilot last week, which saw Department of Health and Social Care vehicles refitted to fully functioning testing sites, following a design developed by the Royal Engineers of the British Army. Today, there are 8 existing mobile units carrying out tests across the country, including in Salisbury, Southport and Teesside.

Mobile facilities can be set up in under 20 minutes, allowing the testing of hundreds of people each day and are now travelling to those most in need and hard to reach. Specially trained Armed Forces personnel will collect swabs at the mobile sites, before they are sent to mega-labs for processing. Those tested will receive results within 48 hours.

Rapid expansion of a network of mobile test units is now underway, with new units being fielded in the coming weeks and at least 96 ready to be deployed by the start of May.

This follows the [announcement last week](#) that other frontline workers would join the priority list for coronavirus testing, alongside the existing commitment to make sure patients and NHS staff are tested for the virus.

New mobile sites will travel to frontline workers in places including:

- care homes

- police stations
- prisons
- benefits centres
- fire and rescue services

Testing Minister Lord Bethell said:

Everyone who needs a coronavirus test should be able to have access to one. New mobile testing units will travel the country to provide vital frontline workers with tests so those testing negative to safely return to work.

We have built up capacity in the system with new testing facilities backed by Britain's world-class scientists and industry partners. This means more workers can know if they have coronavirus if they have been demonstrating symptoms.

Testing is key in our battle against coronavirus. We now have the ability to provide more people with the certainty they need to get back to the front line when it is safe to do so.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Our Armed Forces will help deliver testing to where it's most needed, using a network of up to 96 mobile units that will be rolled out in the coming weeks. They will make sure our care sector get the testing required to remain in the frontline of the fight against this pandemic.

National Testing Coordinator John Newton said:

Across the country we are creating new infrastructure to rapidly increase our capacity to test for coronavirus. New mobile testing units will help us achieve our goal of 100,000 coronavirus tests a day, providing tests to vital frontline workers wherever they need them.

In a matter of weeks we have worked with Britain's leading scientists, academics and industry partners to build scores of new testing facilities and Britain's largest network of diagnostic labs in history. Each day we are delivering more coronavirus tests, and allowing more frontline staff testing negative for the virus to safely return to work.

The government's objective is to deploy 96 mobile testing units during the month of May – 92 will be staffed by the Armed Forces and a further 4,

located in Northern Ireland, will be operated by civilian contractors.

Earlier this month the Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced the UK government's [5-pillar plan](#) to rapidly scale up coronavirus testing across the UK. The new 5-pillar plan outlines the ambitions to:

- pillar 1: scale up swab testing in PHE labs and NHS hospitals for those with a medical need and the most critical workers to 25,000 a day in England, with the aligned testing strategies of the NHS in the devolved administrations benefiting from PHE's partnership with Roche through a central UK allocation mechanism
- pillar 2: deliver increased commercial swab testing for critical key workers in the NHS across the UK, before then expanding to key workers in other sectors. There are now more than 30 drive-through sites collecting these samples across the UK
- pillar 3: develop blood testing to help know if people across the UK have the right antibodies and so have high levels of immunity to coronavirus
- pillar 4: conduct UK-wide surveillance testing to learn more about the spread of the disease and help develop new tests and treatments
- pillar 5: create a new national effort for testing, to build a mass-testing capacity for the UK at a completely new scale

[Over half a million food packages delivered to those at risk](#)

- Government hits milestone one month on from launching unprecedented support package for the country's most clinically vulnerable people
- Working together with local leaders and the food industry, government has formed an unprecedented alliance to ensure vulnerable people get the supplies that they need
- Social media highlights the range of people being supported by food boxes

Over 500,000 boxes of essential food have now been delivered by wholesalers to those at highest risk across the country with hundreds of thousands more packages to follow in the coming weeks, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP today (Sunday 26 April) confirmed.

The milestone was surpassed a month after the Government launched its shielding programme – an unprecedented package of

support for those most at risk of catching coronavirus. As part of this the Government partnered with national food distributors – Brakes and Bidfood – to get these supplies delivered to people’s doorsteps.

The effort has also seen a partnership forged between central government and local agencies that is helping to support clinically extremely vulnerable residents through the coronavirus outbreak, delivering a programme on a scale not seen since the Second World War.

These partnerships – known as Local Resilience Forums – were put in place across the whole country by the Communities Secretary to manage the local response to this national emergency.

There are around 1.85 million people with underlying severe health conditions that must be protected and have been asked to stay at home and shield.

Many have local family and friends who can get the vital provisions needed. For those without, the Government has committed to providing the support they need, for as long as they need it.

Communities Secretary of State Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This is very challenging time for those having to be shielded from the coronavirus. I said at the start of this national emergency that whilst people need to spend more time at home, we would make sure that they never felt alone and I’ve been pleased to hear that our food packages are helping make life that bit easier.

We have already delivered over half a million food packages to the most vulnerable and we will be delivering hundreds of thousands more food packages in the coming weeks.

I want to relay my own personal thanks to all those delivering these packages to communities around the country led by the local alliance we have put in place. They are among the many unsung heroes are working alongside councils and volunteers to support those who need it most.

Those receiving food packages have taken to social media to share personal messages of thanks and appreciation to the drivers and authorities working to deliver the packages.

Those who took to social media included:

- The father of a disabled girl who is high risk also gave thanks, saying he felt [lucky to live in the UK](#)

- [Kaydyn](#), a five-year-old shielding with cystic fibrosis who sent a video message to the Communities Secretary when he received his first food box
- [Tanya Louise](#), undergoing treatment for cancer, who posted a video blog 'unboxing' her first food parcel
- Good Morning Britain weatherman Alex Beresford, who posted a heartfelt [message of thanks](#) for the support his shielding mother has received, including one of the Government's food boxes.
- Many comments included a special thanks to wholesalers Brakes and Bidfood and their drivers

What's in the box?

The box contains a week's worth of essentials for one person. While the contents of the parcels may have slight variation (depending on stock), they contain items such as:

- Tinned vegetables – as well as tinned tomatoes – tinned fruit, multipacks of soup and baked beans, and a jar of cooking sauce. Other tins will contain meat and tuna.
- Store cupboard staples such as pasta, rice or noodles or cous cous, potatoes and cereal.
- Bread and fresh fruit.
- Coffee, tea and biscuits.
- Toilet paper and shower gel.

Local Resilience Forums

Headed by the most senior of local leaders these local partnerships bring together members of the emergency services, councils, the NHS and others to lead their communities through this crisis with the full support of central government.

Recognising this unprecedented challenge, the Communities Secretary took the decision to embed some of the finest military planners in the world within these groups.

This combined expertise and leadership is ensuring a comprehensive, coo-

ordinated and consistent response across the country.

Further updates on the shielding programme:

- Up to 200,000 calls a day are being made to the shielded, and councils are helping to support them in other ways – including organising regular calls from volunteers to those isolated.
- In addition, Chris Townsend OBE has been appointed to lead the huge cross-government effort to support and protect the most vulnerable during this difficult time.
- Wholesalers Brakes and Bidfood are working with the government to make this happen performing a critical role with front line staff packaging and delivering care packages to vulnerable people across the UK
- On Sunday 22 March, we published [guidance for the most at-risk group](#), or 'clinically extremely vulnerable', on shielding and how they can protect themselves from coronavirus.
- Expert doctors in England have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we know about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- People who are clinically extremely vulnerable to the Covid 19 virus fall within one or more of these categories:
 - □Solid organ transplant recipients.
 - People with specific cancers:
 - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
 - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
 - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the

immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors

- people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.
- People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
- People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
- Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.
- The conditions that mean you are on the shielded list are kept under review and people can be added based on clinical decisions by their GP or specialist.
- People have been advised to shield until the end of June and government is keeping that under review.
- The contents of the box were put together in consultation with nutritionists and industry groups, but there are some limitations around what could be included. For example, due to packing and delivery logistics the boxes can only contain items that can be stored at room temperature. That is why there are more tinned goods and longer lasting fruit such as apples or pears.

[Home Secretary delivers daily coronavirus update \(25 April 2020\)](#)

Good afternoon, welcome back to Downing Street for the Government's daily press conference on Coronavirus.

Today I am joined by Lynne Owens, Director General of the National Crime

Agency, and by Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England.

The Government's step-by-step plan has always been to slow the spread of this disease, increasing the capacity of our world-class hospitals so that they can cope.

And your hard work has helped us to do this.

Our instruction remain clear.

People should stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Through our ongoing monitoring and testing programme, as of 9am today, I can report that:

- Six hundred and forty thousand, seven hundred and ninety-two tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including twenty-eight thousand seven hundred and sixty tests yesterday
- One hundred and forty-eight thousand, three hundred and seventy-seven people have tested positive, that's an increase of four thousand nine hundred and thirteen cases since yesterday
- Sixteen thousand, four hundred and eleven people are currently in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down from seventeen thousand and forty-nine yesterday
- And sadly, of those in hospital with the virus, twenty thousand three hundred and nineteen have died. That's an increase of eight hundred and thirteen fatalities since yesterday.

As the deaths caused by this terrible virus pass another tragic and terrible milestone, the entire nation is grieving.

My deepest sympathies and condolences go to those who have lost loved ones.

And, I would like to pay tribute to the selfless frontline workers who have been struck down by this virus.

Their exceptional public service and sacrifice will not be forgotten.

The last time I was here, I spoke about the impact of this national emergency on crime – and the tough but necessary measures to tackle it.

I announced enhanced support for victims of domestic abuse, many of whom are particularly vulnerable and exposed.

Our You Are Not Alone campaign – to signpost the help available and to make it clear to victims they can still leave home – has made an incredible

impact, with 98 million online impressions.

Now, I refuse to ignore the amplified risk for the victims of hidden crime, and I – along with Lynne, and across our law enforcement agencies – refuse to allow criminals to take advantage of these unprecedented times.

Now, provisional data from police shows a fall in overall crime during this Coronavirus outbreak.

Car crime, burglary and shoplifting are all lower than in the same period from this time last year.

But we also know that the most sophisticated criminals continue to exploit and capitalise on this horrendous crisis.

So today, I have a message for them: our world-class law enforcement is also adapting, and they are onto you. And their efforts are paying off.

Last week, Border Force found one million pounds worth of cocaine set to be smuggled into the United Kingdom through the Channel Tunnel, hidden in boxes of face masks.

The NCA has taken down multiple websites running phishing scams and selling bogus PPE.

Last week they arrested two people suspected of trying to sell unregistered coronavirus testing kits.

The NCA have alerted the police to thirteen hundred potential child sexual abuse cases.

They have made arrests and safeguarded children.

This is a sickening reminder of the frightening activity that is targeted towards our children every single day.

International action to crush criminal gangs and to shut drug supply lines continues, and the National Crime Agency helped to seize 700 kilograms of heroin in Pakistan, potentially bound for the United Kingdom.

Reported losses for Coronavirus fraud now stands at £2.4 million, and I would like to thank the major banks and UK Finance who are working with us to protect vulnerable people from becoming victims of crime.

And, our outstanding frontline police officers and their staff continue to do an exceptional job in keeping our streets safe.

They are still responding to all types of crime.

That includes some extraordinary dangerous driving, with a minority of drivers using quieter roads as their own personal race track and endangering people's lives.

We have seen speeds of up to one hundred and fifty one miles per hour clocked

on the M1, and one hundred and thirty four miles per hour in a 40 miles per hour zone in London.

Police and fire staff continue to put their arms around people and communities: by taking people shopping and taking prescriptions to the elderly, driving ambulances and supporting those in need throughout this difficult times.

I am immensely grateful to each and every one of our emergency service heroes.

And I would also like to take this particular opportunity to pay tribute to the South Yorkshire Police motorcyclist tragically killed as he responded to an emergency earlier this week.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and colleagues at this truly heart-breaking time.

His death shows how our exceptional police put their own lives at risk every day to protect the people that they serve.

Coronavirus merely highlights the extent of their courage, their compassion and their commitment.

Police officers and staff continue to put themselves at risk to ensure that people follow the life-saving instruction to stay at home.

Now, staying at home for almost five weeks has changed the way in which we are living our lives, and I know how tough this has been.

Huge sacrifices have been made: jobs have been lost; to people's futures have been put on hold, weddings have been cancelled, families have been unable to see one another.

Every single person across our United Kingdom has given up a great deal.

From the vulnerable, the elderly, those self-isolating alone, to the hundreds of thousands of small and medium sized businesses, to the children and young people whose education has been put on hold.

This extraordinary national effort has been quite remarkable and I am grateful to everybody for playing their part.

But we should not lose sight of the fact this country's efforts are working.

So my thanks go to the British people.

You have fostered a spirit of national unity that is helping us to get through this challenging time.

The action we are collectively taking is working, and your sacrifices are undoubtedly saving lives.

We know that people are frustrated, but we are not out of danger yet.

It is imperative that people continue to follow the rules designed to protect their families, their friends and their loved ones. This will continue to save lives.

We all want to return to living our lives as normally as possible, and, of course, as soon and as safely as we can – and that's what the entire Government is working towards.

But the five tests we have laid out must be met before we can ease these life-saving restrictions.

We must be sure that we can continue to protect the NHS.

That there is a sustained and consistent fall in the daily rates of death.

That the data shows the rate of infection decreases.

That the operational challenges are met.

And of course, that there is no risk of a second peak of infections.

Until then, we all have a role to play in pulling our country out of this crisis.

So, I urge you all to stay strong and embrace that spirit of national unity by continuing to follow the advice: to stay at home, to protect the NHS and save lives.

[Scottish Secretary thanks military for coronavirus support](#)

THIS terrible pandemic has forced people apart but it has also brought us together. People from all corners of the UK have shown a shared determination to beat the virus.

We have changed our way of life completely, even though it has brought difficulty, distress and discomfort. We are staying at home, we are protecting the NHS and we are saving lives.

As we enter our fifth week of these difficult times, I'd like to put on record again my thanks to our NHS and everyone working in it. Our NHS has always embodied the values of compassion and togetherness that we share across the UK. In our country's greatest time of need, it is there for all of us. Care workers across the country are also going the extra mile to keep those they look after safe.

Out of our immense gratitude for these heroic front line staff, a heart-

warming new national tradition has begun – our Thursday night Clap for Carers. I feel great pride to see such public support for our health service and the care workers we rely on.

There are countless other critical workers up and down the country, working in difficult circumstances in to keep us fed, to keep the lights on, to keep essential transport running and to keep our streets clean.

These are not the only heroes, of course. There is another group of men and woman I'd like to make a special point of thanking: our Armed Forces.

No-one who watched his presentation in Downing Street on Wednesday could fail to have been impressed by the words of General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff.

He outlined how up to 3,000 personnel were now actively engaged in the battle against coronavirus across the UK, with 20,000 on standby.

“This is a truly national endeavour,” he said. “Our Armed Forces are drawn from every part of the UK and much of the Commonwealth and they take great pride of serving the communities they are part of.”

I know we are equally proud of them.

The work they are doing here is quite extraordinary. The General, a man with more than forty years of distinguished service to his country, could not have been clearer – he had never seen the Armed Forces face a bigger logistical challenge.

Nowhere can that incredible effort be seen more clearly than here in Scotland.

The military are distributing medical equipment to hospitals around the country, assisted with the new testing facilities in Glasgow, and transported vital equipment to set up our new testing megalab in Glasgow – the launch of which I was privileged to attend (albeit virtually via by Skype) – on Wednesday.

The Royal Airforce stands ready to airlift critically ill patients from Scotland's most remote communities. Working hand-in-hand with the Scottish Ambulance Service, life-saving RAF missions have been flown to carry patients from Arran, Orkney and Shetland to hospitals on the mainland.

Scotland is now covered by three Puma helicopters deployed to Kinloss in Moray. They will act as air ambulances, taking ambulance service paramedics to patients across Scotland and then carrying them safely to hospital. This has already begun as on Wednesday, a RAF Puma helicopter based at Kinloss has supported the NHS in Scotland with the first transfer of a critically ill patient from the Isle of Arran.

Behind the scenes, officers are working with each of Scotland's 14 health boards. And a team of planning specialists are now embedded in the Scottish Government's emergency co-ordination centre at St Andrew's House in

Edinburgh.

Support here it is part of a huge operation across the UK and beyond.

Military experts are at the heart of the UK Government helping to fight the battle against online disinformation and they are assisting the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in their efforts to repatriate UK citizens struggling to return to their loved ones from abroad.

The Armed Forces have become an essential part of our response to the coronavirus outbreak and I know everyone in Scotland will join me in saluting their dedication, skill and courage.

Like many of you, I'll be at my front door again on Thursday to clap for our carers. But I'll also be thinking proudly of the men and women of our Armed Forces – and I'll add an extra round of applause for the great work they are doing for us all.