Key Recommendations for Hygiene and Infection Control in Veterinary Practice

**PREVENT INFECTION**
Effective implementation of hygienic measures is essential to prevent and contain the transmission of nosocomial infections to animals and humans both within veterinary settings and in the community.

### CLEAN AND DISINFECT HANDS
The most important activity in the control of nosocomial infections in practice.

**Wash hands**
- At the start and end of the working day.
- After visiting the toilet.
- Before and after eating or smoking.
- When visibly soiled.
- After handling animal fluids and excretions.
- Before aseptic or invasive procedures in combination with gloves.

**Disinfect hands**
(use alcohol-based hand sanitizers 70-90%)
- That are dry and clean.
- Before and after handling each patient.
- Before and after gloving.
- Before touching equipment, door handles and keyboards.

No jewelry (rings, bracelets), wristwatches, nail polish or fake nails should be worn. Nails should be kept short and clean.

### WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING
To ensure that hands and forearms can be kept clean short-sleeved lab coats or scrubs should be worn at all times when handling patients. Protective clothing should not be worn outside the working environment.

**Additional protective clothing**
- Masks, hair caps, sterile gowns and gloves should be used for surgical and invasive procedures.

**Plastic aprons, gloves and masks are required when handling**
- Patients with known or suspected contagious disease.
- Potentially contaminated fluids and secretions.

**Change the additional protective clothing:**
- Between patients.
- When moving between wards, isolation and intensive care units.

### SURGICAL PREPARATION
The operating room must only be used for surgical procedures.

**Clip (don’t shave) surgical sites immediately before surgery in a separate area.** Vacuum looses hair. Clean and disinfect clippers between each patient.

**Skin preparation** after clipping using antibacterial soap with water followed by alcohol & chlorhexidine.

**Surgeon must scrub in with antibacterial soap or mild soap & disinfectant according to practice protocols.**

**Protective clothing (“scrubs”)** must be used during surgery. Scrubs used in other areas must not be worn in the surgical ward.

**Only use sterilized instruments. Autoclave if possible.**

**Cold sterilization only under exceptional circumstances.**

**Prevent animal from licking, scratching or otherwise traumatizing the surgical site.**

**Handle wounds and bandage changes with clean or aseptic technique.**

### LAUNDER CLOTHING AND BEDDING
- Scrubs and lab coats - daily and when visibly soiled or contaminated.
- Bedding and animal blankets - between each patient and when visibly soiled or contaminated.
- Laundry should be done on the premises or by a professional company.
- Remove any gross visible soiling contamination prior to washing (use gloves).
- Wash at 60°C and dry at high temperature to eliminate infectious organisms.
- Maintain clear separation between dirty and clean areas in laundry room to avoid cross-contamination.
- Store clean laundry in dedicated areas.

### CLEAN AND DISINFECT PREMISES
Use approved cleaning products and disinfectants for veterinary premises and follow label instructions. Use gloves.

**Surfaces and Equipment**
- Clean and disinfect before and after each patient and when visibly soiled or contaminated.
- Clean and disinfect door handles, keyboards, light switches and telephones on a daily / regular basis.

**Common areas** (entrances, reception, waiting rooms and corridors)
- Clean and disinfect daily and when visibly soiled or contaminated.

**Wards, isolation and intensive care units**
- Clean and disinfected before and after each patient and when visibly soiled or contaminated.

### TRAIN STAFF
Train and encourage all staff to understand and comply with good hygiene practices. Correct hygiene is not difficult if everyone is aware of its importance.

- Develop written hygiene protocols (display prominently) and appoint a member of staff with responsibility for promoting and enforcing hygiene practices.
- Establish thorough in-house training of staff and encourage attendance at continuing education courses on hygiene.

### EDUCATE PET OWNERS
Use printed documentation (leaflets, posters) & face to face communication.

- To ensure good hygiene practices during clinical visits and following contact with their animal in their homes.
- To support veterinary efforts in improving hygiene and responsible use of antimicrobials with good adherence to prescribed therapies.
- To convey better understanding of the public health implications of zoonotic and antimicrobial resistant infections in pets.