

- FOR ALL PET OWNERS -

AFTER-HOURS VETERINARY SERVICES ARE CHANGING IN PRINCE GEORGE EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST.

Starting July 1, 2022, after-hours urgent veterinary services in Prince George will be changing due to critical staffing shortages. This is an unfortunate circumstance which weighs heavily on the members of every veterinary practice and team in our community. A group of veterinary clinics in Prince George has been working together to provide urgent-care services. The After-Hours Urgent Care Group members are:

- Hart Family Veterinary Clinic
- Ospika Animal Hospital
- College Heights Veterinary Clinic
- Prince George Veterinary Hospital
- Murdoch Veterinary Clinic
- Birchwood Veterinary Clinic

EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST, 2022 - NEW AFTER-HOURS PET EMERGENCY SERVICES WILL NOW BE:

- **Weekdays to 10pm**
- **Weekends 8am - 10pm**
- **No Urgent Care currently June 29th, July 25 & 26th due to staff shortages, and most likely more in the future.**
- **Emergencies outside of regular vet hours and these after-hour emergency options, people will need to connect with Vet Triage online *OR* go to an Emergency Facility (Kelowna, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary).**

Even though this group has been working together, Prince George does not have a true 24-hour emergency facility. The closest ones are in Kelowna, Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary. The Prince George After-Hours Urgent Care Group has been working together for many years to offer a solution to emergencies: a shared after-hours option that often has a veterinarian working a full day at their regular schedule, taking on the emergency role throughout the night with little to no sleep, and then continuing with their daily hours the following day.

Throughout this past year the region has lost approximately 25% of their veterinary professionals, this is compounded with the fact that before this year, we still did not have enough veterinarians to service all of the pets in Prince George.

In today's climate almost every industry is battling a shortfall of workers and this industry is no exception. The numbers are now hitting a critical level and in order to continue to provide quality care during the day, there is an immediate need to limit after hours availability.

All hospitals and clinics are working together to help one another and to help our community, but burnout is still happening. Doctors and technicians are continually leaving the region, if not the profession entirely. Burnout in this industry has been an ongoing problem and has hit our area with force.

There are a few factors happening that are contributing to this critical level.

• **A severe lack of doctors.**

On top of BC's need for more veterinarians, northern British Columbia has additional challenges recruiting these professionals to our communities.

• **Prince George is a hub for the north, but there is no Emergency Clinic here.**

In addition to the immediate needs within Prince George, surrounding communities are also struggling to support their call volumes and unfortunately this ends up pushing their patients into our area. This adds more stress and strain on local veterinary teams. The clinics of Prince George are not staffed or medically equipped to function as emergency 24-hour care facilities.

• **The After-Hours Urgent Call system is often used inappropriately.**

A high percentage of emergency calls are not true emergency cases, much like what has been happening in the human ERs for many years. While many situations can be distressing to pet owners, they are not so urgent that they need to be seen outside regular office hours.

What is happening to help deal with these issues.

Although changing the urgent-care after hours availability may appear like a step backwards, it really is a solution that will help keep doctors healthy and working in our community. All who participate in this After-Hours Urgent Care Group have invested tremendously in our industry, pets, and clients.

There is no short-term fix to this shortfall of available doctors. The Prince George and BC Chamber of Commerce, The Regional District, representatives from UNBC and local political representatives have been engaged and are willing to help be a voice for our concerns.

Many clinics have started to use Vet Triage (www.vettriage.com) to help pet owners be seen by a certified veterinarian through an online option. This helps sort out the life-threatening emergencies from those that are stable enough to seek care during office hours the following day. This is an attempt to take some emergency burden off the local veterinarians.

What we are asking of the public.

For understanding and compassion as we traverse this difficult time.

Reach out to your MLA and other government officials and ask them to develop plans to avert further crisis measures becoming necessary.

Utilize the following priority chart to determine if your pet is in a true emergency crisis, or if it is an issue that can be handled either during daytime hours or through Vet Triage.

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Dr. Sammi Fuller
Hart Family Veterinary Clinic

Casey Bockus
Prince George Veterinary Hospital

Ramona Veekman
Ospika Animal Hospital

Dr. Christine Murdoch
Murdoch Veterinary Clinic

Flavia Bigas Bonafine
College Heights Veterinary Clinic

Mel Bauman
Birchwood Veterinary Clinic

NON-URGENT

RECOMMEND: *Wait for daytime hours*

- Itching / Scratching
- Chronic weight loss
- Chronic illnesses / diseases with no recent change in condition
- Hair loss
- Red eyes / skin / ears
- A single seizure with full recovery
- Ear infections

SEMI-URGENT

RECOMMEND: *Wait for daytime hours OR visit www.vettriage.com*

- Vomiting (2 or fewer episodes)
- Acute diarrhea without vomiting
- Straining to defecate
- Witnessed ingestion of foreign body with no signs of illness
- Blood in urine / straining to urinate in a dog or female cat
- Small wounds or lacerations
- Non-productive cough but breathing fine otherwise
- Broken toenails
- Squinting / eye discharge / significantly swollen eye
- Allergic reactions (facial swelling, hives)
- Limping
- Witnessed ingestion of rat bait
- Mild trauma / single injury
- Ear infection with head shaking

URGENT

RECOMMEND: *Visit www.vettriage.com first - then call After-Hours Urgent Care Group*

- Persistent / severe vomiting
- Appetite loss for more than 24 hours
- Known foreign body ingestion causing illness
- Aggressive coughing without distress
- Trouble during active labor / illness post-birth
- Multiple seizures within a 24hr period, but not actively seizing
- Diarrhea paired with vomiting or loss of appetite
- Toxin ingestion
- Blood in urine in a male cat
- Porcupine quills

TRUE EMERGENCY

RECOMMEND: *Contact After-Hours Urgent Care Group immediately, Vet Triage OR an Emergency Clinic*

- Respiratory distress
- Collapse
- Unable to walk or get up
- Straining to urinate (especially in male cats)
- Active seizures / cluster seizure / status epilepticus
- Severe trauma (hit by car, animal attack, severe or multiple injuries)
- Profuse bleeding from any wound
- Persistent non-productive retching