



recommendations for how veterinary practices should operate throughout these challenging times.

The British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) has also released more specific guidance for companion animals, including recommendations for how best to approach pet vaccination over the coming months.³ The BSAVA also cites the Small Animal Veterinary Surveillance Network (SAVSNET) as a potential source of information on the local prevalence of vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) in the UK.⁴

Although we hope this resource is useful on its own, we have also analysed data provided by both diagnostic laboratories and veterinary practices in a series of wider 'impact' reports, including further information on VPDs.

In addition, by monitoring the volume of consultations recorded by SAVSNET, we can get some sense of the impact of social distancing measures on practices participating in SAVSNET, with an initial decrease in submitted data of 80 to 90 per cent compared to median 2019 consultation volumes (Fig 1) – a pattern likely to have been replicated nationwide. This decreasing trend was apparent some days before the government formally announced enhanced social distancing measures on 23 March 2020, and has been sustained into the second phase of these measures, demonstrating the proactive approach taken by companion animal veterinary practitioners to preserve public health.

As in human health, decisions around reducing patient consultations to control SARS-CoV-2 transmissions will need to be balanced against the welfare imperative to continue to see some patients, especially where there is a significant risk to life or welfare. Although still remaining approximately 60 to 70 per cent below normal levels in the week commencing 25 May 2020, it is becoming clear that consultation volumes are now starting to increase. Ensuring adequate staff, operating in a safe, supported

CORONAVIRUS

Social distancing impact on companion animal practice

IN the veterinary sector SARS-CoV-2 has led to practitioners being faced with a daily struggle to balance their responsibility to preserve animal welfare with ensuring the continued health of the public, colleagues and their families.

As many colleagues will be aware, the RCVS and BVA have released and are updating guidance^{1,2} detailing

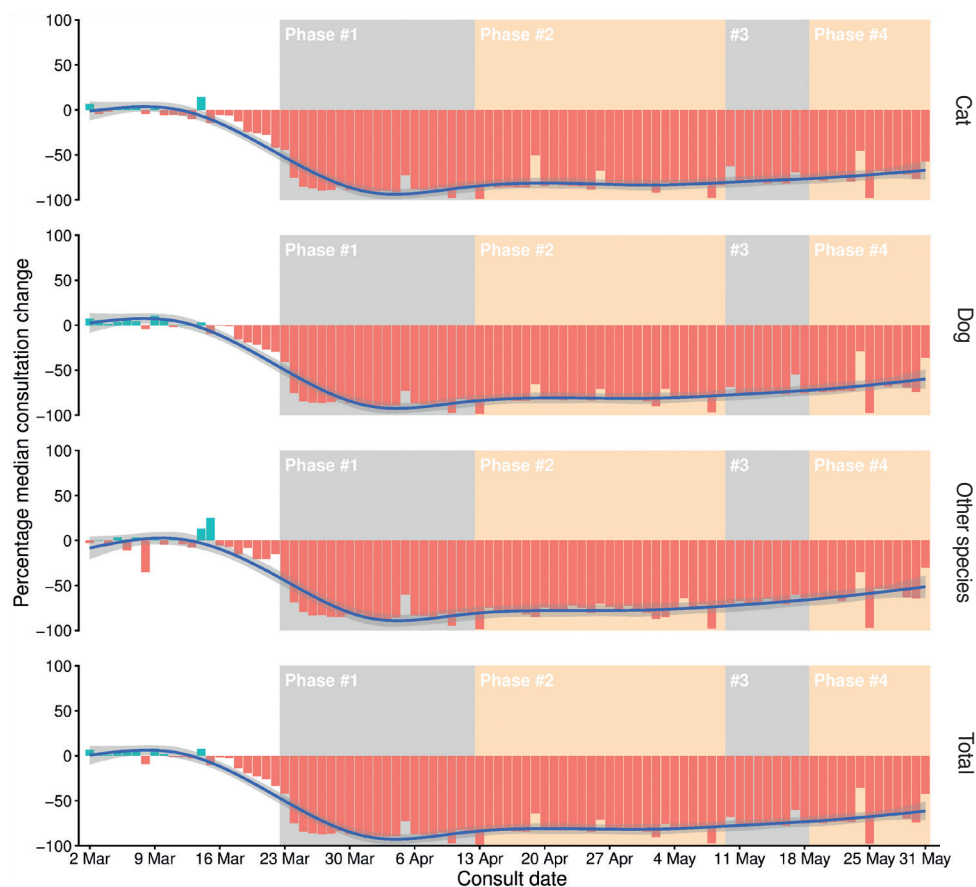


Fig 1: Percentage change in consultation data volume submitted to SAVSNET between 2 March 2020 and 31 May 2020, compared against median 2019 data, in total and by species group

environment to accommodate such increases is of paramount importance.

We will continue to monitor trends in these data and hope they might provide a useful resource for individual practices to gauge their own response. The complete reports, including detailed analyses of VPDs, can be accessed at www.liverpool.ac.uk/savsnet/covid-19-veterinary-practice-uk

If you have any suggestions as to what we can include in future reports, please feel free to contact us, email: savsnet@liverpool.ac.uk

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- 3 BSAVA. Covid-19. www.bsava.com/COVID-19 (accessed 8 June 2020)
- 4 SAVSNET. SAVSNET in realtime. www.liverpool.ac.uk/savsnet/real-time-data (accessed 8 June 2020)

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References

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