

EXCLUSIVE

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Veterinary equipment offered to 'save human lives' amid virus outbreak

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By [Lucy Cormack](#)
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Ventilators used in veterinary clinics for cats and dogs are being urgently sought for use in human hospitals to assist with the rising number of critical coronavirus patients.

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The Australian Veterinary Boards Council has agreed to assist the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society in locating additional ventilators and other supplies across Australia in response to a possible high demand at intensive care units.



Respirators are an essential medical tool in dealing with coronavirus - but their numbers are limited. GETTY

"Many ventilator models used by vets are exactly the same as the machines used in human hospitals, which means the intensivists are already familiar with their use. They just need to know where to find them," said Dr Julie Strous, executive director of the veterinary council.

"Having the vet ventilator inventory ready to go means the doctors are well-prepared should the need arise. It's better to have too many machines than not enough."

The council said many specialist facilities and university-based veterinary hospitals had "state-of-the-art facilities," including multiple human mechanical ventilators, which were once serviced by biomedical engineers and "suitable for saving lives in our hospitals."

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Dr Strous said Australia had an advantage during the coronavirus pandemic, "as we can offer this equipment now to save human lives."

President of the Australian Veterinary Association Julia Crawford said it would be a matter for the Department of Health to ensure any ventilators from vet clinics were of a sufficient age and grade, and suitable to be used for people."

"We do have a lot of ventilators on the east coast because of ticks. Some are very old, some aren't so old. They would have to be thoroughly cleaned and used appropriately ... but they are all ex-human machines," Dr Crawford said.

Adrian Simon, practise manager of Sydney Veterinary and Emergency Specialists, said: "If a human hospital makes requests of us, we will of course fully co-operate to share resources."

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