

Evaluation of benefits and challenges of temporary veterinary clinics in remote northern Canadian communities

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In 2019 and 2020, Veterinarians Without Borders (VWB) Canada conducted temporary veterinary clinics for companion animals in five remote northern Canadian communities where there is no local access to veterinary medicine. Over this period, the VWB Canada teams provided some level of care to >200 companion animals, including physical examinations, vaccinations, dewormings, medical treatments and sterilizations, as well as education to >120 families on animal health, welfare and One Health. VWB is planning a 5-year expansion of these projects using the experiences of the first two years of operation to enhance program development and delivery. The aim of this study was to survey the participants of these 2019 and 2020 VWB temporary clinics to obtain quantitative and qualitative data regarding demographic information of animals and owners, the satisfaction and perceived benefits of the clinics, and challenges and concerns with the continuation of these efforts under the current model. At the time of publishing, there were 18 respondents, and 100% of respondents were strongly satisfied with the treatment of their animal(s) and also believed that community dog issues such as free-roaming animals and dog bite incidents had improved since the introduction of VWB temporary clinics. Furthermore, 89% of respondents believed that their pets were healthier because of the veterinary care received and 78% of respondents believed that their families and communities were likewise healthier. These findings suggest that the continuation of VWB temporary clinics provides real and perceived benefits to remote northern Canadian communities, including improved health outcomes, education and accessibility to animal health care programs.

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