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Frequently Asked Questions About Coronavirus and Pets

We have pulled together relevant information from various sources in order to try to assist pet owners during this current time of uncertainty and questions. We will keep you updated as we learn more. At this time, the CDC, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) say there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, spread COVID-19.

As always, it's a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals, and animal owners should continue to include pets and other animals in their emergency preparedness planning, including keeping a two-week supply of food and medications on hand.

ARE CATS AND DOGS AT RISK OF CONTRACTING THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

- According to the World Health Organization there is no evidence companion animals or pets, such as cats and dogs, can spread the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - Further, there is no evidence cats or dogs can be a source of COVID-19 infection to people.
 - Experts have not expressed concern about transmission to or from animals. Multiple international and domestic health organizations have indicated that pets and other domestic animals are not considered at risk for contracting or spreading COVID-19.
- AVMA

AVMA – additional information

What can I do to keep my pets safe from COVID-19?

- Keep pets away from people infected with COVID-19.
- Confine pets of infected people to limit spread, as it's not yet known whether pets may be nonclinical carriers of disease.
- Follow good hygiene practices at all times, especially hand washing before and after interacting with pets.
- ***People with COVID-19 should be advised to tell their public health point of contact that they have pets or other animals in their home.***

In addition to other prevention measures, people with COVID-19 who are identified by public health officials as requiring home care and isolation should be advised to limit interaction with pets and other animals. Specifically, while these people are symptomatic, they should maintain separation from pets as they would with other household members, and avoid direct contact with pets, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked and sharing food. Service animals should be permitted to remain with their handlers.

If possible, a household member should be designated to care for pets in the home. If the individual in home care and isolation must care for pet(s), including service animals, they should ensure they wash their hands before and after caring for pets and wear a facemask while interacting with pets, until they are medically cleared to return to normal activities.

SHOULD WE BE TESTING PETS FOR HUMAN COVID-19?

- At this time, testing pets for COVID-19 is unwarranted, as there is no indication that apparently healthy and unexposed pets should be tested for the human COVID-19 virus.
- According to the World Health Organization, people who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from others including children, spouses and even pets to ensure they do not inadvertently transfer infection.
- While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. There is no reason to think that any animals including pets in North America might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus. To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19. At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can spread COVID-19. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals. For more information on the many benefits of pet ownership, as well as staying safe and healthy around animals including pets, livestock, and wildlife, visit CDC's Healthy Pets, Healthy People website.

HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE OUR PETS TO ENSURE THEY DO NOT BECOME CARRIERS OF THE VIRUS?

- Walk on a leash when outdoors.
- Avoid contact with persons known or suspected to have been exposed to COVID-19. If you are infected or have been exposed, include your pet(s) among those you do not have contact with, and wash hands before and after handling your pet(s).
- Routinely clean and disinfect animal contact surfaces (e.g. cages, feeding areas) and immediately after contact with high-risk species.

What if my dog or cat is showing signs of flu-like illness?

- If your pet shows signs of coughing, sneezing, lethargy or otherwise, call your veterinarian at the first sign of illness and keep them indoors to prevent further spread.
- Signs of illness in dogs and cats can be associated with various common viral and bacterial infections (e.g. kennel cough and canine flu) that are not transmissible to people.

Are exotic pets, such as ferrets and rats, safe from the disease?

- The practice of selling/consuming wildlife that may carry the virus has been implicated as the source of the current global coronavirus outbreak.
- If you have recently acquired an exotic pet, it should be handled hygienically as indicated above, quarantined away from other pets, and your veterinarian should be consulted.

Should we get rid of our pets to be sure they will not transfer the virus to our family?

- No. There is currently no evidence that household pets like dogs and cats are involved in transmitting coronaviruses to humans.
- Pet ownership can have health, emotional and social benefits, so practicing responsible pet ownership and hygienic practices is recommended to keep families and pets together and free from disease.

What is known about **other-NON COVID-19** coronaviruses in cats and dogs?

- Feline infectious peritonitis is associated with a viral infection from feline NON COVID-19 coronavirus. There are many different strains of feline NON COVID-19 coronavirus, which differ in their ability to cause disease. It is now recognized that feline enteric coronavirus strains can mutate to the more harmful type of virus and cause FIP disease.
- Canine enteric NON COVID-19 coronavirus is a highly infectious intestinal infection in dogs, especially puppies. Companion animal NON COVID-19 coronavirus is usually short-lived, but may cause considerable abdominal discomfort, vomiting and diarrhea.

These are not symptoms of the human COVID-19

These viruses ARE NOT transmitted to or cause disease in people

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR CORONAVIRUS IN PETS?

- There is no specific treatment for NON COVID-19 coronaviruses in dogs or cats, as mild clinical signs are unlikely to require therapy.
- Supportive care, including replacement of lost fluids, nutritional support, and anti-nausea medication, may be used for more severe cases.
- Rarely, hospitalization is necessary. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses and, therefore, will not help treat NON COVID-19 coronavirus infections.

Can manufactured pet food carry COVID-19?

- It is highly unlikely that dry or canned pet foods can transmit viral diseases

For more information:

- [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/) – <https://www.who.int/>
- [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/) - <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- [WSAVA Information](https://wsava.org/) - <https://wsava.org/>
- [Canadian Veterinary Medical Association](https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/) - <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/>
- [American Veterinary Medical Association](https://www.avma.org/) - <https://www.avma.org/>

If your pet is sick or injured, contact your local vet immediately or your closest Animal Emergency Service hospital.