

GENERAL (ALL PETS)

Q: Is the coronavirus disease a danger to your pet?

A: While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-animal transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans.

People who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from people and pets to ensure that they do not inadvertently transfer infection as per WHO recommendations.

Q: If I get sick, is it safe for me to care for my pets?

A: Currently expert organizations advise that there is no evidence that pets in a home are a source of infection to other animals or to humans. If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, public health officials recommend you restrict contact with pets as a precaution. If possible, have another member of your household care for your pet. This is to reduce the likelihood of your pet spreading the disease through environmental contamination on fur. If you have a service animal or you must provide care for your pet yourself, wash your hands before and after any interaction with them. The evolving scientific information around this new virus reinforces the need to treat pets as we do our family members; isolate them from other infected individuals and practice good hygiene when handling them.

Three things to remember:

1. Keep infected people away from pets.
2. Keep pets exposed to people with COVID-19 away from unexposed people and animals.
3. Good hygiene and proper hand-washing should be practiced when handling pets.

If you are not ill with COVID-19, you may interact with your pet as you normally would, including walking them on a leash, feeding them, and playing with them.

Q: What is pet coronavirus?

A: There are a lot of different coronaviruses out there. It's a whole family of viruses! Some are animal viruses, some are human viruses... But the Canine Coronavirus that we see, and the Feline Coronavirus that we see, are not the same as COVID-19. Both Feline and Canine Coronavirus are usually mild diseases in animals. Sometimes they can be very severe in young animals, and puppies and kittens. The most typical canine and feline coronavirus symptoms are diarrhea, which is very different than what we see in human COVID-19. And there's also a form of the feline coronavirus that is actually a mutation on the virus that results in a very serious disease called Feline Infectious Peritonitis (or FIP). If your pet is experiencing any of those signs, call your veterinarian right away and your veterinarian could help you decide what sort of care your pet needs.

Q: Can my pet get COVID-19?

A: While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-animal transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans. The current recommendation is to keep pets away from infected people. It is recommended to follow normal hygienic practices when handling pets, especially washing hands thoroughly before and after interacting with pets.

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Q: Are people getting rid of pets out of fear of COVID-19?

A: While there have been some stories circulating online about people giving up their pets due to fear of COVID-19, VCA's animal shelter partners assure us that, in general, this is not the case. There is no need to surrender or give up your pet due to COVID-19! There is no evidence at this point to indicate that pets can spread COVID-19 to people. In fact, many people are finding that the additional time they are spending at home is making this a great opportunity to adopt a new pet or foster a pet in need. It's true that social distancing can be socially isolating, but shelter pets can make great companions to help get us through tough times. Why not reach out to your local animal shelter or rescue and see if they are open for adoption or in need of fosters?

@VCAAnimalHospitals is here to answer questions about your pets as you adjust to the #NewNormal. #VCApets

Q: Can I still take my pet to the vet?

A: At VCA we're committed to the safety of both our clients and our associates, because veterinary medicine is an essential business, we are committed to remaining open and being here for you and your pet in your time of need. That being said, we have changed a bit the way that we are seeing appointments.

We ask that you not come into VCA on a walk-in basis. If you have an emergency, we ask that you not just come straight in but that you call on your way in and let us know that you're coming. What we're going to do when you get to the hospital is, we're going to come meet at your car and we're going to take your pet into the hospital where we will then do whatever diagnostics are needed and treat your pet appropriately. Your veterinarian's going to stay in very close contact with you via cell phone. They're going to call you and they're going to ask you all of the relevant questions that they would usually ask you in the exam room. They're also going to keep in very close contact with you either by text or by phone call to make sure that you're working together to provide the very best treatment and care for your pet.

Q: What if my pet shows symptoms (coughing, fever, chills) of human coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: Dogs and cats can show flu-like signs of illness that are associated with many common viral and bacterial infections that are generally not transmissible to people. If your pet shows any signs of illness, such as coughing, sneezing or lethargy, call (or text) your veterinarian to arrange treatment. Signs of illness in dogs and cats are usually associated with various common viral and bacterial infections (kennel cough, canine flu, etc.) that are neither coronaviruses nor transmissible to people.

When a dog or cat presents with coughing, sneezing or lethargy, veterinarians often conduct respiratory PCR testing to help identify the cause, commonly kennel cough. Testing for common infections should be performed in dogs and cats with flu-like signs and consult your veterinarian on whether further testing or treatment is necessary.

Q: Do doggy masks protect against coronavirus?

A: No.

There's no scientific evidence that these masks protect pets from either infectious diseases or air pollutant. Dogs' faces have a lot more variation than human faces do, meaning that a face mask designed to fit one type or breed of dog is unlikely to fit most others. Additionally, we cannot explain to a dog why we are putting something potentially scary or uncomfortable on their face.

Learn more: bit.ly/2GGbwML and bit.ly/3b2NSYH



Q: Should we be testing pets for the COVID-19 virus?

A: Currently veterinary and human health authorities agree that there is no indication that routine testing of pets is necessary. As the understanding of the role of virus transmission in dogs and cats advances, then recommendations for routine testing for SARS-CoV-2 may be reassessed. Antech veterinary laboratory is conducting a SARS-CoV-2 surveillance program to detect the emergence and frequency of the SARS-CoV-2 virus transmission from humans to companion animals.

Q: Why does information about COVID-19 keep changing?

A: COVID-19 is a newly emerging disease, and the situation is still evolving. We are learning more about the disease COVID-19 and the SARS-CoV-2 virus every day.

Q: Can manufactured pet food carry the COVID-19 virus?

A: It is highly unlikely that dry or canned pet foods are potential viral vectors.

Q: Can I get my pets food and medicine delivered?

A: We know that these can be really challenging and difficult times for our clients and pet owners and for our associates. And at VCA, we want everyone to know that we're here for you and your pets and we care. We have home delivery on the myVCA website and on the myVCA app. You can go in, order your pet's medication, their food, look at their previous prescriptions and get those refilled if you need to. And all of that can be sent straight to your home. You don't even have to leave the safety of your home. We hope that you are staying well, and you're having some fun staying home with your pets and making the best out of this difficult time.

Q: How can I get in touch with my VCA Hospital?

A: At VCA we have a number of different ways you can contact your hospital or your veterinarian. You can still call on the regular phone number that you would, just know that your hospital and your veterinarian may be very busy right now, so there may be a little bit longer of waiting times than usual. You can also go on the myVCA app and you can look up all the information about your hospital, information about your pet. You can schedule an appointment there. You can also use the texting function to text your hospital. You can text with your hospital just as you would anybody else in your contact list.

GENERAL (CATS)

Q: Can the virus that causes COVID-19 affect cats?

A: While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-cat transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans. The current recommendation is to keep pets away from infected people. It is recommended to follow normal hygienic practices when handling pets, especially washing hands thoroughly before and after interacting with pets. People who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from people and pets to ensure that they do not inadvertently transfer infection as per WHO recommendations.

Q: Can cats get COVID-19?

A: There is limited evidence that cats can become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-cat transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans. The current recommendation is to keep pets away from infected people. It is recommended to follow normal hygienic practices when handling pets, especially washing hands thoroughly before and after interacting with pets. People who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from people and pets to ensure that they do not inadvertently transfer infection as per WHO recommendations.



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3. Good hygiene and proper hand-washing should always be practiced when handling pets.

GENERAL (DOGS)

Q: Can your dog get and then transmit COVID-19 to you?

A: While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-dog transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans. The current recommendation is to keep pets away from infected people. It is recommended to follow normal hygienic practices when handling pets, especially washing hands thoroughly before and after interacting with pets. People who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from people and pets to ensure that they do not inadvertently transfer infection as per WHO recommendations.

GENERAL (EXOTIC PETS)

Q: Can ferrets get COVID-19?

A: There is limited evidence at this point to indicate that ferrets may become infected with COVID-19, but no evidence that they can spread it to people in a household setting. The current recommendation is to keep pets away from infected people. It is recommended to follow normal hygienic practices when handling pets, especially washing hands thoroughly before and after interacting with pets.

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Q: What about hygiene and care of my exotic pets (including rodents and ferrets)?

A: COVID-19 is a human virus, and the greatest risk is transmission between people. There is still no evidence that small exotic pets such as ferrets and hamsters can carry or transmit the virus that causes human COVID-19. As a precaution, we recommend keeping exotic pets in a safe enclosure and away from people infected with COVID-19.

NEWS HEADLINES

Q: Have any pets died from COVID-19?

A: A 17-year-old dog in Hong Kong tested positive for the virus. Later, after testing negative for the virus, the dog passed away. The reason for this dog's death are unknown. However, 17-years-old is fairly old for a dog and it is likely this dog was at the end of its natural lifespan. Therefore, it is likely this dog died of something completely unrelated to its quarantine and COVID-19.



Q: What's up with the dog that tested positive for COVID-19 and later died?

A: A 17-year-old Pomeranian dog in Hong Kong tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 in late February. This dog never became ill or had any symptoms of COVID-19. After being returned to his owner, the dog passed away. The cause of this dog's death is unknown and the owners have declined to have a necropsy conducted. However, because of the dog's advanced age, he was likely near the end of his natural life. While we have now seen a few reports of human-to-cat transmission in pets belonging to people with COVID-19, there are currently no reports of pets found to be the primary source of infection or animal-to-human transmission. SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is a human virus and the largest known (at this time) transmission risk is between people and not from pets to humans.

Q: What about that Tiger in NY?

A: A tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. The tiger was sick with a cough and decreased appetite. Three other tigers and three African lions also had a dry cough, but only one tiger was tested because of the difficulty collecting samples from these animals. The lions and tigers are presumed to have been infected by a caretaker who was infected with COVID-19, but not showing any symptoms. The zoo has been closed to the public since March 16, but the first signs of illness weren't seen until March 27. All the affected big cats are expected to recover.

BEHAVIOR (ALL PETS)

Q: How might me working at home affect my pet's routines?

A: Some pets will love the extra attention and companionship while other pets may need their space. Pets usually like routine because it's predictable, so changes to their daily routine could be stressful for some pets. Do your best to maintain a consistent schedule and if your pet seems more anxious, seek help from your veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist.

@VCAAnimalHospitals is here to help with some behavioral tips for your pets as you adjust to the #NewNormal. #VCApets

Q: How might social distancing change my pet's behavior?

A: Dogs that are fearful of people or other dogs might actually be less stressed during walks because everyone is trying to avoid each other. But if your dog is used to being more social, they might get bored and ask for more attention from you than usual. This is a good opportunity to teach your pet a new trick or brush up on training and this includes cats!

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BEHAVIOR (DOG)

Q: Should you still walk your dog if you're ordered to shelter in place?

A: You can still walk your dog outside as long as you practice social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from other people. Don't forget to keep your dog on a leash at all times! If you can't walk your dog outside, you can provide physical exercise indoors with puzzle toys, playing fetch indoors, or practicing recall back and forth in your home.

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Q: My dog thinks I'm staying home to play with him. How do I establish boundaries?

A: Make it easy for your dog to understand when it's playtime and when you need to work. If you are playing with your dog, do it away from your workspace and be fully engaged with your dog. When it's time to work and it is hard to ignore your dog's attention seeking behavior, give your dog a toy that encourages independent play such as a food puzzle (e.g. stuffed Kong).

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BEHAVIOR (CAT)

Q: My cats beg for treats all day long. How do I break this habit?

A: Teach your cat to work for its food. Take advantage of your cat's natural hunting instinct by feeding your cat with a food puzzle or hide treats in different parts of your house so your cat has to actively search for them. Your cat might actually be asking for your attention so try playing with your cat or even teaching a new trick.

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PET SAFE HYGIENE AND PROTECTION

Q: Should I be disinfecting my phone?

A: The CDC recommends cleaning AND disinfecting frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. For electronics follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics. If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

Q: Can my dog get COVID-19 from dirty sidewalks? Should I be disinfecting their feet after a walk?

A: Disinfectants or Clorox wipes can be skin irritants and toxic and should not be used on pets! There is currently no evidence to support additional bathing of pets as a result of COVID-19. When you do bathe your pet, always use a mild shampoo specifically formulated for pets and lots of water to bathe your pet.

Q: If pet fur can carry the virus, does that mean I should clean or wipe my pets down with bleach/alcohol/Clorox/Lysol, etc.?

A: No. While it's easy to disinfect a doorknob or countertop with disinfectant wipes, alcohol or bleach, all of these things could harm your pet. There is currently no evidence to support additional bathing of pets as a result of COVID-19. When you do bathe your pet, always use a mild shampoo specifically formulated for pets and lots of water to bathe your pet, keep them clean, and avoid causing skin problems with harsher soaps or shampoos.

Q: I can't find sanitizer anywhere. What should I use to wash my hands?

A: While hand sanitizer can be convenient, the CDC recommends you wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for more information.