

Helpful Questions and Answers about Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Your Pets



You have probably seen and heard a lot about the coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to keep you and your family safe. But what about the other, furrier members of the family—your pets? Below, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers some questions and answers to help keep you, your family, and your pets safe during the pandemic.

Q. Can I get COVID-19 from my pet or other animals?

A. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of pets spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 in people is considered to be low. At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. There is a small number of animals around the world reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after having close contact with a person with COVID-19.

Until we learn more about how this virus affects animals, treat pets as you would human family members to protect them from a possible infection. This means:

- Don't let pets interact with people or other animals outside the household.
- Keep cats indoors when possible to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people.
- Walk dogs on a leash maintaining at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people and animals.

- Avoid dog parks or public places where a large number of people and dogs gather.

If your pet gets sick or you have any concerns about your pet's health, talk to your veterinarian.

Q. If I get sick with COVID-19, could I infect my animal with the virus?

A. We are still learning about this virus, but it appears it can spread from people to animals in some situations. If you are sick or think you are sick with COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>) that you limit contact with animals until more information is known about the new coronavirus.

This means you should avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food or bedding. If possible, have another family member care for your pet while you're sick. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with your pets, and wear a cloth covering on your face. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>)

Q. Should I get my pet tested for COVID-19?

A. Routine testing of pets for COVID-19 is not recommended at this time. We are still learning about this virus, but it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of pets spreading the virus is considered to be low. If your pet is sick, consult your veterinarian.

Q. Can animals carry the virus that causes COVID-19 on their skin or fur?

A. Although we know certain bacteria and fungi can be carried on fur and hair, there is no evidence that viruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19, can spread to people from the skin, fur or hair of pets.

However, because animals can sometimes carry other germs that can make people sick, it's always a good idea to practice healthy habits (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/stay-healthy-pets.html>) around pets and other animals, including washing your hands before and after interacting with them.

Q. Are pets from a shelter safe to adopt?

A. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. There is no reason to think that any animals, including shelter pets, play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

Q. What animal species can get COVID-19?

A. We currently do not fully understand how COVID-19 affects different animal species. We are aware of a small number of pets, including dogs and cats, reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 after having had close contact with a person with COVID-19.

Recent research shows that ferrets, cats and golden Syrian hamsters can be experimentally infected with the virus and can spread the infection to other animals of the same species in laboratory settings. Pigs, chickens and ducks did not become infected or spread the infection based on results from these studies. Data from one study suggest that dogs are not as likely to become infected with the virus as cats and ferrets. These findings were based upon a small number of animals and do not indicate whether animals can spread infection to people.

The first animal that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed as positive for SARS-CoV-2 was a tiger in a zoo in New York on April 4, 2020.

On April 22, 2020, USDA and CDC announced confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection in two pet cats. (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/news/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sars-cov-2-animals) These were the first pets in the United States to test positive for SARS-CoV-2. The cats lived in two separate areas of New York state. Both had mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery.

For any animal that is presumed to be positive, USDA's National Veterinary Service Laboratory performs additional testing to confirm the infection and posts results of positive animals on its website.

(https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_One_Health/sars-cov-2-animals-us)