

## **Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidelines for Pet Owners**

### **What to do if you own pets**

- Until we learn more about how this virus affects animals, treat pets as you would other human family members to protect them from a possible infection.
- Because there is a small risk that people with COVID-19 could spread the virus to animals, CDC recommends that pet owners limit their pet's interaction with people outside their household.
  - Keep cats indoors when possible and do not let them roam freely outside.
  - Walk dogs on a leash at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from others.
  - Avoid public places where a large number of people gather.
  - Do not put face coverings on pets. Covering a pet's face could harm them.
- There is no evidence that the virus can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets.
- Do not wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use.
- Talk to your veterinarian if your pet gets sick or if you have any concerns about your pet's health.

### **What we know about COVID-19 in animals**

- We do not know the exact source of the current outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), but we know that it originally came from an animal source.
- We are still learning about this virus, but it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations. A small number of pets (including dogs and cats) worldwide have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19, and have recovered.
- Based on current limited evidence, domestic animals appear to rarely become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is also low.

### **DC's Phase One reopening guidelines for dog parks**

DC's dog parks have been reopened with recommended safeguards for pet owners ([coronavirus.dc.gov/phaseone](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phaseone)). Please also keep the following in mind:

- Consider avoiding dog parks or other places where large numbers of people and dogs gather.
- Do not take your dog to a dog park if you are sick or if you have recently been in close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Do not take your dog to a dog park if your dog is sick. Signs of sickness in dogs may include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, discharge from the nose or eyes, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Walk dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people and animals, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded places.
- Try to limit your dog's interaction with other people outside of your household while at the dog park.
- As much as possible, avoid touching common items in the dog park like water bowls. [Wash your hands](#) or use hand sanitizer after touching items from the park. To make sure your dog has fresh water, consider bringing your own portable water bowl.
- Limit other pet items brought to the dog park, such as toys. [Clean and disinfect](#) anything taken to the park and returned home (leashes, toys, water bowls).

- Do not wipe or bathe your dog with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use.

### **Information for People with COVID-19 and People Who Are Under Home Care and Isolation**

- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, restrict contact with pets and other animals. This includes avoiding petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food with their pets. Exceptions include service animals.
- Individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 should NOT leave the house to walk their pets.
- If possible, a household member other than the affected individual should care for animals for 14 days from the last date of exposure to the affected person.
- If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wear a cloth face covering while interacting with your pet, and wash your hands before and after you interact with pets.
- If someone else is walking your pet, transfer the pet outside of your home and maintain 6 feet of distance (for example, tie the leash to the external doorknob). Arrange for the dog walker to bring their own leash to minimize the risk for contamination.
- Individuals who are self-isolating and have a home with fenced in property can allow the family pet(s) out into the fenced area.
- People with COVID-19 should refer to [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) for more information.

### **What to Do if You Are Under Home Care and Isolation and Your Pet Needs Veterinary Care**

- If you are sick with COVID-19 and your pet becomes sick, **do not take your pet to the veterinary clinic yourself.**
- Call your veterinarian and let them know you have been sick with COVID-19.
- Some veterinarians may offer telemedicine consultations or other plans for seeing sick pets. Your veterinarian can evaluate your pet and determine the next steps for your pet's treatment and care.
- If your pet needs to be seen by a vet, an unaffected household member or friend who does not live with you should be designated to transport the pet to the veterinary hospital/clinic.
- Follow the instructions given by your veterinary hospital/clinic to minimize risk to your pet and other individuals.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Can I get COVID-19 from my pets or other animals?

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

Pets have other types of coronaviruses that can make them sick, like canine and feline coronaviruses. These other coronaviruses cannot infect people and are not related to the current COVID-19 outbreak.

2. What should I do if my pet gets sick and I think it's COVID-19? Do I need to get my pet tested for COVID-19?

At this time, routine testing of animals for COVID-19 is not recommended. Talk to your veterinarian about any health concerns you have about your pets.

If your pet gets sick after contact with a person with COVID-19, do not take your pet to the veterinary clinic yourself. Call your veterinarian and let them know the pet was around a person with COVID-19. Some veterinarians may offer telemedicine consultations or other plans for seeing sick pets. Your veterinarian can evaluate your pet and determine the next steps for your pet's treatment and care.

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

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 (like bacteria and fungi) that can make people sick, it is good to practice [healthy habits around animals](#), including pets. This includes washing hands before and after interacting with them.

4. Can I take my dog to a daycare or a groomer?

- If you must take your pet to a groomer or boarding facility, follow any protocols put into place at the facility, such as wearing a cloth face covering and maintaining at least 6 feet of space between yourself and others if possible.
- Limit pet items brought from home to the groomer or boarding facility, and disinfect any objects that are taken into a facility and returned home (such as leashes, bowls, and toys). Use an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#) to clean items and rinse thoroughly with clean water afterwards.

5. Are pets from a shelter safe to adopt?

Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is 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.

6. Can wild animals, including bats, in the US get the virus that causes COVID-19, and can they spread it back to people?

- There is currently no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 is present in any free-living wildlife in the United States, including bats. Further, there is no evidence that bats in the United States are a source of the virus that causes COVID-19 for people.
- The first case of a wild animal testing positive for the virus in the United States was a tiger with a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. However, this tiger was in a captive zoo environment, and public health officials believe the tiger became sick after being exposed to a zoo employee who was infected and spreading the virus.
- Because wildlife can carry other diseases, even without looking sick, it is always important to enjoy wildlife from a distance. Keep your family, including pets, a safe distance away from wildlife.
- Do not feed wildlife or touch wildlife droppings. Do not approach or touch a sick or dead animal – contact Animal Control instead.