

COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions About Pets and Animals

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 animals can carry COVID-19?

We don't know for sure which animals can be infected with the virus that causes 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 suggested dogs are not as likely to become infected with the virus as cats and ferrets. These findings were based on a small number of animals, and do not show whether animals can spread infection to people.

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. For more information about how to stay healthy around pets see [cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/stay-healthy-pets.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/stay-healthy-pets.html).

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. Mayor's Order 2020-080, issued July 22, 2020, requires that people must wear a mask when they leave their homes if they are likely to come into contact with another person for more than a fleeting moment. The full Mayor's Order on masks can be found at coronavirus.dc.gov/maskorder

Limit pet items brought from home to the groomer or boarding facility and clean and disinfect any objects that are taken into a facility and returned home (such as leashes, bowls, and toys). For more information about cleaning and disinfecting items see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html).

5. Can I take my dog to a dog park?

Dog parks provide socialization and exercise for dogs, which is an important part of their wellbeing. Because there is a small risk that people with COVID-19 could spread it to animals, pet owners are recommended to not let pets interact with people outside of their household.

If you choose to go to a dog park, please refer to DC Health's *Guidance for Pet Owners* and *Guidance for Parks and Open Spaces* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

6. 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 without calling ahead to let your veterinarian know that 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.

7. 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.

8. What should I do if there are pets at my long-term care facility or assisted living facility?

People who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should avoid providing care for sick pets, if possible. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. However, it appears that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from people to animals after close contact with people with COVID-19.

Until we learn more about how this virus affects animals, use similar precautions for pets and other animals in your facility as you would for other people in your facility. This will help protect both people and pets in your facility from COVID-19.

- Do not let pets in the facility interact with sick people.
- Pets or other animals should not be allowed to roam freely around the facility.
- Residents should avoid letting their pets interact with people as much as possible.
- Dogs should be walked on a leash at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from others.
- People sick with COVID-19 should avoid contact with pets and other animals.
- Do not allow pets into common areas of the facility such as cafeterias and social areas.
- Cats should be kept indoors to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people outside of the facility.

Talk to a veterinarian if a pet in your facility gets sick or if you have any concerns about the health of any pets in the facility. Email any inquiries to covid.vet@dc.gov.

What about imported animals or animal products?

Currently, we do not have any evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available. CDC, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) play distinct but complementary roles in regulating the importation of live animals and animal products into the United States.

- CDC regulates animals and animal products that pose a threat to human health,
- USDA regulates animals and animal products that pose a threat to agriculture; and
- FWS regulates importation of endangered species and wildlife that can harm the health and welfare of humans, the interests of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, and the welfare and survival of wildlife resources.

9. 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. Further, there is no evidence that bats in the United States are a source of the virus that causes COVID-19 in people. However, we don't yet know if this new coronavirus would make North American species of bats sick.

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.

If a wild animal were to become infected with the virus, we don't know whether the infection could then spread among wildlife or if it could spread to other animals, including pets. Because wildlife can carry other diseases, take steps to prevent getting sick from wildlife:

- Keep your family, including pets, a safe distance away from wildlife.
- Do not feed wildlife or touch wildlife droppings.
- Always wash your hands and supervise children washing their hands after working or playing outside.
- Leave orphaned animals alone. Often, the parents are close by and will return for their young.
- Consult your state wildlife agency's guidance if you are preparing or consuming legally harvested game meat.
- Do not approach or touch a sick or dead animal – instead, contact Animal Control's 24-hour line (202-576-6664).