

**Phase Two**  
**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Pet Owners**

**What We Know about COVID-19 in Animals**

- We do not know the exact source of the current outbreak of Coronavirus 2019 disease (COVID-19), but we know that it originally came from an animal source.
- 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.
- Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is low.
- For more information about COVID-19 and animals, see *COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions about Pets and Animals* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

**What to Do if You Own Pets**

- Due to a small risk that people with COVID-19 could spread the virus to animals, DC Health 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.
  - 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.
- **For more information about keeping pets safe during the COVID-19 pandemic**, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) webpage at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html).

**DC's Reopening Guidance for Dog Parks**

Walking your dog is important for both animal and human health and wellbeing. **DC's dog parks continue to be open with recommended safeguards for pet owners.** Visitors to dog parks should practice **everyday prevention measures** for preventing COVID-19. **More information can be found in the DC Health *Guidance for Parks and Open Spaces* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)**

**Please also keep the following in mind:**

- **Stay at home if you are sick** or you were recently exposed to someone with COVID19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep 6 feet of distance between you and other people who are not in your household.
- **You must wear a mask or cloth face covering** when around other people who are not in your household. For more information on Mayor's Order 2020-080, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/maskorder](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/maskorder).
- 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.
- Consider avoiding dog parks or other places where large numbers of people and dogs gather
- Do not put face coverings on pets. Covering a pet's face could harm them.
- 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). For more information about cleaning and disinfecting household 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).
- 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

- People with COVID-19 and in home isolation should 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.** For more information regarding service animals, see DC Health *Guidance for Service and Therapy Animals* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
- 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. Service animals should be permitted to remain with their handlers.
- 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 at least 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.
- For more information for people with COVID-19 see DC Health *Guidance for Persons Who Tested Positive for COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)

### 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 ahead of time and let them know you have been sick with COVID-19. Follow the instructions given by your veterinary hospital/clinic to minimize risk to your pet and other individuals.
- 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 veterinarian, an unaffected household member or friend who does not live with you should be designated to transport the pet to the veterinary hospital/clinic.