

COVID-19 Advice for Pet Owners - Updated April 23, 2020

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding best practices for pets during this time focuses on social distancing, similar to what people should be doing. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and CDC have some information available on this topic, which is shared below. Please note, the terms “SARS-CoV-2” and “COVID-19” can be understood to mean the same thing for the purposes of this pet-related information.

Key Takeaways:

- If you are ill with COVID-19, you should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people, until more is known about this virus
- It's always a good idea to wash your hands before and after interacting with animals
- Ensure your pet is kept well-groomed
- Regularly clean your pet's food and water bowls, bedding material, and toys

Helpful Links:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>
- <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/sars-cov-2-animals-including-pets>

SARS-CoV-2 in pets

On April 22, the CDC announced the first National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL)-confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection in two pet cats. These are the first pets in the United States to test positive for SARS-CoV-2. Currently, we have no information that suggests that pets might be a source of infection for people with the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

If you are ill with COVID-19 you should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people, until more is known about this virus. When possible, have another member of your household or business care for any animals, including pets, while you are sick. If you have a service animal, or you must care for your animals, including pets, wear a cloth face covering; don't pet, share food, kiss, or hug them; and wash your hands before and after any contact with your pet, service animal, or other animals. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home.

Additional [guidance](#) on managing pets in homes where people are sick with COVID-19 is available from the CDC.

Keeping pets safe

Be Prepared - For responsible pet owners, preparing in advance is key. Make sure you have an [emergency kit prepared](#), with at least two weeks' worth of your pet's food and any needed medications. Usually we think about emergency kits like this in terms of what might be needed for an evacuation, but it's also good to have one prepared in the case of quarantine or self-isolation when you cannot leave your home.

Pet Social Distancing - Other appropriate practices include not letting pets interact with people or other animals outside the household; keeping cats indoors, if possible, to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people; walking dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet from other people and animals; and avoiding dog parks or public places where a large number of people and dogs gather.

If You Are Ill and Have Pets - If you are ill with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed with a test), restrict contact with your pets and other animals, just like you would with other people; have another member of your household care for your pets while you are sick; avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and

sharing food or bedding. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wear a cloth face covering and wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

People and Pets Need Each Other - There is currently no reason at this time to think that domestic animals, including pets, in the United States might be a source of infection with SARS-CoV-2. Accordingly, there is no reason to remove pets from homes where COVID-19 has been identified in members of the household, unless there is risk that the pet itself is not able to be cared for appropriately. In this emergency, pets and people each need the support of the other and veterinarians are there to support the good health of both.

Q: Can pets' fur, collars, leashes, and carriers serve as sources of disease transmission for SARS-CoV-2?

COVID-19 appears to be primarily transmitted by contact with an infected person's bodily secretions, such as saliva or mucus droplets in a cough or sneeze. It appears that COVID-19 can also be transmitted by touching a contaminated surface or object (i.e., a fomite) and then touching the mouth, nose, or possibly eyes, but this seems to be a secondary route. Smooth (non-porous) surfaces (e.g., countertops, doorknobs) transmit viruses better than porous materials (e.g., paper money, pet fur). Because your pet's hair is porous, and fibrous, it is unlikely that you would contract COVID-19 by petting or playing with your pet. However, because pets can spread other diseases to people and people can also spread diseases to animals, it's always a good idea to wash your hands before and after interacting with pets. There is no evidence to suggest that animals, including pets, which may be incidentally infected by humans are playing a role in the spread of COVID-19. Human outbreaks are driven by person-to-person transmission.

While risk of transfer of SARS-CoV-2 from collars, leashes, and carriers also appears to be limited, it's always a good idea to keep pet collars, leashes, and carriers clean and, fortunately, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is susceptible to [routine cleaning](#). The Environmental Protection Agency has [published](#) a list of wipes, ready-to-use, and dilutable products for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Q: Is it safe to walk my dog? What should I do/not do during that walk?

Taking a walk helps support you and your dog's good health, and can contribute to wellbeing for both of you. To observe social distancing, keep space of at least 6 feet between yourself and others who do not live in your home, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded areas. Dogs should be walked in the neighborhood in a way that allows for social distancing and keeps them safe. Avoid dog parks (many are currently closed) and other public places where groups of people and dogs may gather. To help maintain social distancing, do not let other people pet your dog when you are out for a walk.