

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



DELAWARE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health

FAQ: Coronavirus & Domestic Animals

Can I get COVID-19 from my pet?

Currently there is no evidence to suggest any animals, including pets or livestock, can spread COVID-19 infection to people.

Can I give COVID-19 to my pet?

Although there have not been reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States, this is a new virus and it is not fully understood. For this reason, it is recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people, until more information is known about COVID-19. Out of an abundance of caution, persons ill with COVID-19 should have another member of your household or business take care of feeding and otherwise caring for any animals, including pets, whenever possible. If you have a service animal or you must care for your animals, including pets, wear a cloth face mask; don't pet, share food, kiss, or hug them, or allow your pet to lick you; and wash your hands before and after any contact with your pet, service animal, and their supplies. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home.

If my pet was around someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19, should I be worried?

Although there have not been reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals. Contact your veterinarian if your pet displays any signs of illness.

What signs or symptoms would an animal with possible COVID-19 have?

Although there have not been reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with their animals. Since this is a new disease that has not been detected in domestic animals, we do not know the symptoms to look for in pets. However, if your pet shows any signs of illness, including respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, contact your veterinarian.



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Is my pet safe to be around other pets? Should I practice social distancing?

It is recommended that pets and other animals from different households be prevented from commingling at this time, out of an abundance of caution. When walking your dog, practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet between you and other people. If you cannot maintain social distancing, follow Delaware's guidance on wearing a face covering. Even though people might not feel sick or show symptoms, they can spread the virus.

If I need to be hospitalized for COVID-19, what do I need to do for my animals?

A family member, friend, or neighbor should be asked to care for your animals while you are hospitalized and until your isolation period has come to an end. Alternatively, you can contact your veterinarian or an animal boarding facility to coordinate boarding your pet while you are in the hospital.

I am ill and my pet needs to see a veterinarian. What should I do?

Contact your veterinarian to see how they wish to proceed. They may be able to help you by telephone or video conference, or they may require that a healthy person bring the pet in for evaluation. In order to best protect their staff, they will likely have special instructions for you and your pet upon arrival, such as keeping the pet in the car until time of examination; asking you to fill out paperwork from your car; and processing payment for services by telephone.

Can animals carry the virus that causes COVID-19 on their skin and fur?

At this time, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread to people from the skin or fur of pets. Normal cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained for your pet. As a general precaution it is recommended that you wash your hands with soap and water after touching animals.

Are veterinarians and pet supply stores open for business?

Essential veterinary care, pet food retail, and animal shelter operations are all deemed essential services in Delaware and therefore remain open to the public. It is recommended to call a facility prior to arrival for special instructions or changes to hours of operation.

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I am helping someone who is sick with COVID-19 by walking their dog/caring for their pet. How do I stay safe?

Always practice social (physical) distancing from the ill person, as well as from other persons when you're on a walk with a dog. Practice handwashing when entering the person's home. Avoid touching surfaces in the person's home as much as possible. Do not share food, kiss, or hug the pet, or allow the pet to lick you; and wash your hands before and after any contact with the pet and their supplies. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils with the ill person or pet. After you attend to the pet and go home, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, and wash your clothes.

I have heard of “coronavirus” infections in dogs, cats, and horses, and even a vaccine in dogs. Are these contagious to people?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Similar but different coronavirus species cause several common diseases in domestic animals which are not contagious to people. Many dogs, for example, are vaccinated for another species of coronavirus (Canine Coronavirus) as puppies. However, this vaccine does not cross protect for COVID-19. There is no vaccine for COVID-19 for animals or humans at this time.

It is important to remember there is currently no evidence that pets can contract or spread COVID-19.

What should I do if I think my animal has the virus?

Call your veterinary clinic with any questions about your animal's health. In order to ensure the veterinary clinic is prepared to evaluate the animal, the owner should call ahead and arrange the hospital or clinic visit. Make sure to tell your veterinarian if your animal was exposed to a person sick with COVID-19, and if your animal is showing any signs of illness.

Can my animal be tested for COVID-19?

At this time, the State of Delaware, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) do not recommend routine testing of animals for the virus that causes COVID-19 in people. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested will contact state animal health officials, who will work with public health and animal health authorities to decide whether samples should be collected and tested.

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I've heard there are studies showing cats and ferrets becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Do I need to worry about my own pets?

Experimental studies conducted in a laboratory setting indicate that cats and ferrets might be able to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and transmit the virus to other animals. However, in a natural setting, it appears that domestic animals are not readily infected with SARS-CoV-2 and we have little to no evidence that they become ill.

I heard there have been dogs and cats, and even a tiger, that have tested positive. Is my pet at risk?

A very small number of pets, including dogs and cats, outside the United States have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 after close contact with people with COVID-19. There have been no reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States. To date, there is no evidence that pets can spread the virus to people. The first case of an animal testing positive for COVID-19 in the United States was a tiger with a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. Samples from this tiger were taken and tested after several lions and tigers at the zoo showed signs of respiratory illness. Public health officials believe these large cats became sick after being exposed to a zoo employee who was actively shedding virus. This investigation is ongoing.

I am experiencing financial hardship and am having trouble caring for my pet. Are there low cost or free pet-care resources available?

If you are seeking help for your pet, there are organizations in Delaware that may be able to help with low-cost veterinary care and vaccinations, spay and neuter, pet food bank, and sheltering. These resources are listed online at:

<https://animalservices.delaware.gov/services/community-resources>

Can I still adopt or foster an animal from an animal shelter at this time?

Yes. There is no evidence that any companion animals, including shelter animals, are a potential source of COVID-19 infection for people. Many animal shelters and rescues continue to look for foster care and adoption applicants.

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How should I prepare for COVID-19 if I have a pet?

- ▶ Designate a trusted pet caregiver (family, friend, neighbor, colleague), who has a set of keys to your home, is familiar with your home and pet, knows your emergency plan, and has your contact information.
- ▶ Prepare pet care instruction documents for each of your pets with information on feeding, watering, health conditions, medications, etc.
- ▶ Make sure your pet is microchipped, the microchip is registered, and information is up to date. Your pet should always be wearing a collar or harness with identification.
- ▶ Make sure your pet's veterinary care and vaccines are up to date. Organize your veterinary records so they are readily accessible.
- ▶ In addition to making sure you have a supply of your own medication, be certain you have at least 2-4 weeks of your pet's medication.
- ▶ Ensure you have an adequate supply of pet food, litter, and other consumable supplies.
- ▶ Have leashes and crates/carriers available in case your pets need to be transported.



Additional Resources

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health): <https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>

Questions? Contact us.



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Those who are deaf and hard of hearing can call

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8:00am-9:00pm Monday – Friday

9:00am-5:00pm Saturday – Sunday



or email DPHCall@delaware.gov