

Interim Guidance for Public Health Professionals Managing People With COVID-19 in Home Care and Isolation Who Have Pets or Other Animals

April 30, 2020

Purpose

This interim guidance is for public health professionals managing the [home care and isolation of people with COVID-19](#) who have pets or other animals (including service or working animals) in the same home. This document is based on the limited available data as of the release date and general recommendations for zoonotic disease infection prevention and control. This is a rapidly evolving situation. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19. Guidance will be updated as new information becomes available. States may have their own specific requirements for these circumstances. [At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19](#) to people.

Definitions Used in this Guidance

Household animals, for the purposes of this document, *refers to companion animals, including pets and service animals, that live in a home or on the premises of a home*. This document does not address instances where a person with COVID-19 interacts with livestock (e.g., pigs, goats, sheep or cattle), wildlife, or other animals on their premises or through duties outside their home.

Public health veterinarian, for the purposes of this document, refers to the state public health veterinarian or designated public health official responsible for handling animal-related public health issues in their jurisdiction.

Suggested Guidance for Homes with Household Animals

People with COVID-19 and in home isolation should be advised to restrict interaction with household animals, in addition to following [other prevention measures](#) to protect others from COVID-19. Specifically, while a person with COVID-19 is [symptomatic](#), they should maintain separation from household animals [as they would with other household members](#), and avoid direct contact with pets, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, sleeping in the same location, and sharing food or bedding. If possible, a household member should be designated to care for pets in the home and should follow standard handwashing practices before and after interacting with the household animal. If a person with COVID-19 must care for pets or other animals, they should ensure they wash their hands before and after caring for them. In accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), service animals should be permitted to remain with their handlers.

Care for household animals that are sick or injured should be coordinated with the household's local veterinarian. In order to ensure the veterinary clinic is prepared for the household animal, the owner should call ahead and arrange the hospital or clinic visit. If an owner is sick with COVID-19, a family member or friend from outside the household

should bring the animal to a veterinary hospital or clinic. Telemedicine may also be appropriate to provide consultation with a veterinarian if the owner has COVID-19 and is unable to find an alternative caretaker to bring the pet to the hospital. Veterinarians that see animals with a new, concerning illness that could be compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infection and that had exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (e.g., living in or being housed in a setting with a person with COVID-19 [such as shelters, prisons, ships]) should contact their [state public health veterinarian](#) for guidance regarding testing.

In some instances, household animals may require alternative care or re-homing if the owner is unable to care for the animal or has surrendered the animal. A home receiving a new household animal should follow [standard handwashing practices](#) before and after interacting with the animal. Shelters receiving household animals should ensure they review and adhere to their established biosafety and biosecurity practices for infectious diseases and review available [interim guidance](#).

Suggested Communications with Community Veterinarians

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. We are still learning about this virus, but it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations. Currently, there is no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 can spread to people from the skin or fur of companion animals. Veterinarians and their staff should review and adhere to their biosafety and biosecurity protocols for infectious diseases to ensure the safety of their patients. Veterinarians and their staff should review the concepts in [NASPHV Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](#). This document outlines routine infection prevention practices designed to minimize transmission of zoonotic pathogens from animals to veterinary personnel. These infection prevention and control guidelines should be consistently implemented in veterinary hospitals, regardless of ongoing outbreaks of infectious diseases, but are especially important during an outbreak of an emerging infectious disease such as COVID-19.

- Contact your state public health veterinarian if you are seeing a new, concerning illness in an animal that has had close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Further messaging for pet owners is available on CDC's [If You Have Animals webpage](#) and [COVID-19 and Animals FAQs](#).

When to Contact a State Public Health Veterinarian

When a public health professional is notified of a pet, or other animal, in the home of a person with COVID-19, they should notify the Kansas [State Public Health Veterinarian](#) at 877-427-7317. Although the clinical spectrum of illness for this virus remains largely undefined in animals, clinical signs more likely to be compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infections in mammalian animals may include a combination of the following:

- Fever
- Coughing

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Lethargy
- Sneezing
- Nasal discharge
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

State public health veterinarians should also be notified if health professionals become aware of an animal that becomes ill with symptoms compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infection and resides or is housed in a setting (e.g., shelter, prison, ship) with a person with COVID-19. Guidance with criteria for evaluating SARS-CoV-2 testing in animals is [available](#).

The Kansas State Public Health Veterinarian may consult with the CDC One Health Team.

Resources

KDHE's up-to-date information on COVID-19: www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus

[The New Coronavirus and Companion Animals – Advice for World Small Animal Veterinary Association Members](#)

[NASPHV Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](#)

CDC's [Healthy Pets, Healthy People Website](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\) Website](#)

[World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\) Q & A Website](#)

CDC's up-to-date information on COVID-19:

- [Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [COVID-19 and Animals: FAQs](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Animals](#)