

## COVID-19 and your Pets

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Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause cold-like illnesses in people, while others cause illness in certain types of animals. Some coronaviruses, such as canine and feline coronaviruses, infect only animals and do not infect people. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was first detected in Wuhan in December 2019 and caused coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

- Can COVID-19 affect dogs and cats?

There have been reports of animals (pet cats and dogs included) infected with the virus worldwide, with most of these animals becoming infected after contact with affected people. Affected dogs have not been reported to show any symptoms. Affected cats may be asymptomatic or display symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea and respiratory signs such as continuous sneezing and non-purulent nasal secretions.

- Do dogs and cats play a role in spread of COVID-19?

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted by contact with an infected person's bodily secretions such as saliva or mucus droplets in a cough or sneeze. A secondary means of transmission is by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching the mouth, nose or possibly eyes. Smooth (non-porous) surfaces such as countertops and door-knobs will transmit the virus better than porous material such as pet fur, as the latter can trap/ absorb the pathogen.

There is currently no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading COVID-19, although caution should still be taken when handling pets of people who are known to be infected. To date no animal to human transmission has been documented, and the risk of animals spreading it to humans is considered low. The virus can, however, be spread from people to animals, especially if they are in close contact. Studies have also shown that cats can transmit the virus to each other. The risk of dogs transmitting infection to humans is likely lower than it might be with cats.

It is important to note that there is no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 can be passed from cats to people so there is no need for owners to relinquish or abandon their animals, even if a cat is diagnosed with COVID-19.

- What should I do for my animals if I contract COVID-19?

The centers for disease control (CDC) currently recommends that people with COVID-19 avoid contact with their pets, as would be done with other human family members. Because there is a risk that people with COVID-19 could spread the virus to animals, pet owners should limit their pet's interaction with people outside their household.

Pets infected with this virus may or may not get sick. Pets that do have symptoms usually have mild illness that can be taken care of at home.

- Can I test my pet for SARS-CoV2?

Testing of an animal should only be performed under direction of the CDC and requires regulatory permission.

- Can ivermectin (a drug used for heartworm prevention) prevent infection with COVID-19 or reduce viral load?

No. A study published in April 2020 suggested that ivermectin could reduce viral load, however the dose required to effectively suppress viral replication would likely be fatal to most animal species.

- Where can I get more information?

The CDC has a website that provides additional client-target information <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html>