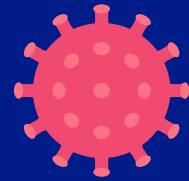


COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

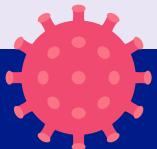


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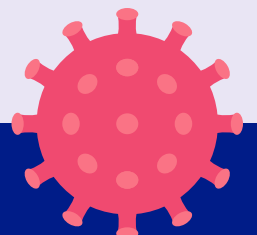
Guidance for Animal Owners



Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19 by visiting the
Government of Bermuda's website coronavirus.gov.bm



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Health



COVID-19 Guidance for Animal Owners

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses, long known to be present in various animal species and humans. Coronaviruses are species-specific and may cause asymptomatic (symptomless) infections, or diseases displaying mild to severe respiratory or gastrointestinal signs. Dogs and cats have their own coronaviruses which do not infect people and are unrelated to the current pandemic.

The coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2 is the causative agent behind the COVID-19 pandemic. Because SARS-CoV-2 is new, the scientific and veterinary communities will not yet fully understand how various species will be affected, but the research and health monitoring continue.

Can I get COVID-19 from my animal?

COVID-19 remains a disease primarily spread by human-to-human transmission. There is no evidence of animals passing the virus to humans or contributing to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 amongst people.

Can my animal get the new Coronavirus?

Despite the explosion of cases of COVID-19 in the human population, the veterinary profession has not seen concurrent outbreaks amongst pets and livestock. The only common domestic animals that show susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 are cats and ferrets. Dogs that tested positive to the SARS-CoV-2 virus and reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) have been mostly asymptomatic, while cats have been asymptomatic or mildly ill. Cats appear to be more susceptible and may develop respiratory or gastrointestinal signs. In experiments, cats passed SARS-CoV-2 virus onto other cats, and based upon this finding, the British Veterinary Association recommends that cats from a COVID-19 positive household, be kept indoors if the cat is tolerant of such keeping. This will reduce the potential for spreading the virus amongst cats. It is not recommended to keep all cats indoors at this time.

In all of the cases of pets, zoo animals, or farm animals becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2, sick owners, handlers, or employees were believed to be the initial source of the infection. These are cases of human-to-animal transmission. Once within a population of susceptible animals, those animals may pass the virus amongst themselves.

Pet travel, Human travel, and Quarantine

Currently, there is not sufficient cause to prohibit international travel of animals. However, be mindful that human travelers can carry the SARS-CoV-2 virus and infect other people and animals. Thus travelers asked to self-quarantine must do so.

For travelers under quarantine, and persons diagnosed with the novel coronavirus, consideration must be given to any companion animals he/she has. In-home quarantine would be preferred, and a family pet may remain in the home during the quarantine. Widely broadcast advice regarding control and prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus also applies to prevent transmission to your animals: minimize contact with animals (social & physical distancing); practice good hand hygiene, and wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after handling the pet, the pet's food and food/water bowls; avoid touching your face; wear a facemask; cough/sneeze into an elbow or a tissue and immediately dispose of the tissue; and disinfect surfaces.

[If I get sick with COVID-19, what should I do with my animals?](#)

If you become ill with COVID-19, avoid contact with the animal, and have another household member provide the daily care, walking, feeding, and playing with the pet. Do not have extended family or a neighbour come into your home to care for the animal.

If you become ill and require your service animal, or you MUST care for the pet, then wear a facemask; don't share food; no petting, kissing, or hugging the animal; wash your hands before and after contact with the animal or with food/water bowls. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets.

If you become ill, remain at home. Do not break quarantine. Re-schedule any non-urgent veterinary appointments to a time when you are no longer a risk to others. If you are ill AND your pet requires urgent veterinary care, contact your veterinary office and a public health official to learn how best to meet the needs of yourself and your animal while minimizing the risks of transmitting a communicable disease to others.

[Can I get a COVID-19 test for my animal?](#)

Currently, there is no commercially available SARS-CoV-2 test for animals. Given the limited threat SARS-CoV-2 presents to our domestic animals, there is no cause to test pets.

[Sick people shouldn't feed feral cats](#)

With evidence of human-to-animal transmission and cat-to-cat transmission, persons in COVID-19 quarantine must not participate in the feeding of feral cats. An infected person may infect the colony of cats. Additionally, with the prospect of asymptomatic carriers, the hygienic practices described above should be employed at cat feeding stations.

[Planning](#)

Consider your animals in any family preparation plans. Ensure that a 2-week supply of non-perishable pet food, cat litter, medications, etc. are on hand should you have to be placed into quarantine.

Plan for Return to Work

Pets can be sensitive to changes in routines. As the community returns to normal, your work-from-home routine with prolonged periods at home, may change to return to the workplace with prolonged absences from home. While your cat may not care, your dog will certainly notice the change. Here are some tips, adapted from Veterinary Practice News, to ease the transition and reduce the likelihood of separation anxiety in your dog:

- *Slowly transition to workday routines*

Schedule waking up, feeding, and walking to reflect your expected workday routine, and introduce a consistent departure schedule that builds on that routine.

- *Take anxiety out of your departure*

Take brief outings leaving your dog at home and gradually extend the time you are away. Considering offering a small treat as you depart to condition the dog to find it rewarding when you leave. If signs of anxiety occur, do not punish the pet, but shorten the time away and slowly build towards to longer periods. Stay calm when leaving or returning home.

- *Exercise*

Having a long walk or other activity that burns energy can help keep pets calm and relaxed while you're away.

- *Keep pets engaged*

Long-lasting treats, food puzzles, and automatic feeders can help keep dogs and cats occupied during the day.

- *Create a safe space*

If you crated your dog when you were out during pre-COVID days, but haven't been crating your dog while working from home, begin to explore either not using a crate while you are away, or reintroducing the crate for short periods while still working from home.

- *Look for signs of stress*

Note any excessive barking or whining, agitation, pacing, digging, shivering, destructive behavior, and inappropriate urination/defecation. If you are concerned, film your pet when you leave, so you can better observe him/her and share the video with your veterinarian.

Recommended references

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>

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

American Veterinary Medical Association: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/sars-cov-2-animals-including-pets>

World Small Animal Veterinary Association: https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pet-Owners_WSAVA-Animal-Welfare-Advice-during-COVID-19.pdf

Veterinary Practice News: <https://www.veterinarypracticenews.com/seven-pet-care-tips-for-owners-returning-to-work/>