

COVID-19 and Animals FAQ

How should I prepare for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) if I have a pet?

Take time now to **make plans and prepare your pets** in case you can no longer take care of your pets or have to go to the hospital due to COVID-19. For a downloadable guide you can complete to help with emergency planning for pets, visit nyc.gov and search for **pets and service animals**.

Make a Plan — Prepare for a Human Health Emergency:

- Designate a trusted pet caregiver (family, friend, neighbor, colleague). Your identified caregiver should have a set of your house keys, be familiar with your home and pet, know your emergency plan, and have your contact information.
- Record important information about your pet so that you can easily access it during an emergency.
- Put together a Go Bag for each pet with basic food, supplies, medicine, identification, a list of emergency contacts, your veterinarian's contact information, and vaccination proof.
- Keep a collar/harness, leash, and your animal's Go Bag in a place where it can be easily found.
- Have crates, food, extra litter, and other supplies on hand for quick movement of pets.
- If you have neighbors who need help, offer to foster or walk their dog.
- Update animal vaccines (Rabies, Bordetella) in the event boarding becomes necessary.
- If your pet is on medication, ask your veterinarian for an extra supply.
- Ensure all medications are documented with dosages and administering instructions.
- If you do not have a yard, be sure to have extra cleaning products and newspaper or puppy pads on hand if you cannot leave your home to walk your dog.

Ensure Proper Identification:

- Dogs and cats should wear a collar or harness, rabies tag, and identification tag at all times. Identification tags should include your name, address, and phone number, and the phone number of an emergency contact.
- Make sure your pet's microchip is registered and up to date.

Veterinary Care:

- Emergency veterinary care is an essential service. However, many veterinary clinics and hospitals are adjusting their practices to reflect social distancing guidance related to COVID-19. If your pet needs care, first **call your veterinarian to determine how to proceed**.

Can I get COVID-19 from my pet?

Currently, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, are contributing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited studies suggest that while dogs may be infected, they do not get sick or spread COVID-19. Cats can be infected, and there are a few reports of cats becoming sick. However, at this time there are no reports of cats spreading COVID-19 to people.

Can a pet's fur spread the virus that causes COVID-19?

There are no reports that viruses which may cause respiratory disease, including COVID-19, can be spread from a pet's fur.

I am sick with COVID-19 and have a pet. What should I do?

Although there is currently no evidence that pets can transmit COVID-19, this is a new virus and it is not fully understood. For this reason, it is best to limit contact with your pets if you are sick. Maintain separation from your pets as you would other household members. If possible, have another member of your household or someone else you trust care for your animals while you are sick. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. Refrain from hugging, kissing, and sharing food with pets; coughing or sneezing on your pets; and allowing animals from different households to mingle. Wash pet bedding, leashes, collars, dishes and toys the same way you would clean other surfaces in your home. For more information, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and search for **if you have animals**.

Can people give this virus to animals and, if so, what animals are at risk?

We are still learning about this new coronavirus and how it spreads. The case of the COVID-19 positive tiger at the Bronx Zoo suggests that a zoo employee spread the virus to the tiger. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19. State animal and public health officials are working closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor this situation and will conduct additional testing if it is warranted.

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 for the household animal, the owner should call ahead and arrange the hospital or clinic visit. Make sure to tell your veterinarian if your animal was exposed a person sick with COVID-19, and if your animal is showing any signs of illness. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested will contact state animal health officials, who will work with public and animal health authorities to decide whether samples should be collected and tested.

I am helping someone who is sick by walking their dog. How do I stay safe?

Always practice social (physical) distancing if this person is still home, as well as when you're on a walk. Wear gloves when entering the person's home as well as when you handle objects, like a leash or dog toys, that were in the home. Follow the general Health Department guidelines on wearing a face covering when you are out in the

community while walking the dog. Even people who don't feel sick or show symptoms can spread the virus.

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 New York State, and are therefore exempt from the "PAUSE" Executive Order. For more information on exempt animal operations, visit agriculture.ny.gov and search for **Interim Guidance for Animal Care Operations**

How can I best practice social (physical) distancing with a pet?

When walking your dog, keep at least 6 feet between you and others. Also remember that in NYC it is the law that your dog must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet. Once home, practice good hand hygiene and wash your hands with soap and water. Follow the general Health Department guidelines on wearing a face covering when you are out in the community while walking the dog. Even people who don't feel sick or show symptoms can spread the virus.

Can I still adopt or foster an animal from an animal shelter?

Yes. There is no evidence that any companion animals, including shelter animals, are a potential source of COVID-19. Many animal shelters and rescues continue to look for foster care and adoption applicants. For more information about Animal Care Centers of NYC's updated operations and adoption/fostering policies, visit nycacc.org/help.

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

For emergency veterinary care:

- Animal Medical Center is a 24/7 veterinary hospital that provides financial assistance through its Community Funds. Funding may be limited at this time. To learn if you qualify and to submit an application, visit amcny.org/financial-assistance.
- Visit positivetails.org/apply-for-assistance to learn more about their grants and to for emergency veterinary care.

For general information on COVID-19, including how to guard against stigma, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.