

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

1. What is a novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

2. What are common symptoms of COVID-19 in humans?

Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

3. How does COVID-19 spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread from person to person through:

- Droplets produced through coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

4. Can pets become sick with and spread COVID-19?

To date, there are no reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 or of them spreading it to people or other pets. In Hong Kong there have been two separate reported cases of dogs testing positive for COVID-19 after being in contact with an owner who had also tested positive for COVID-19. Signs of illness were not reported in either dog. One dog was released from quarantine after testing negative for COVID-19 and the other dog is still under quarantine. At this time, there is no evidence that pets, including dogs and cats, can spread COVID-19.

5. What should I do if I have to interact with a pet who was in close contact with a person with respiratory symptoms?

- Although the risk of disease transmission from the fur appears to be low at this time, shelter staff are advised to take precautions until more is known.
- Wear a gown and gloves. Face masks are not needed for healthy shelter staff and should be reserved for high-risk human interactions. Wash your hands with soap and water before and after each interaction with animals.
- Do not allow pets to lick your face during handling and avoid excessive interaction such as petting, cuddling, hand-feeding, and sharing food.



Key Messages:

There is no evidence that pets can become sick with or spread COVID-19.

Pets can spread other diseases to people, however, so wash your hands before and after handling pets.

Animal care and control staff should follow standard protocols for handling sick animals or those exposed to disease.

Where can the public go for more information?

Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health
Dial 2-1-1
California Department of
Public Health
916-558-1784
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
800-CDC-INFO
800-232-4636

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6. What should I do if the pet is impounded at the shelter?

- Consider decontamination of pets coming into the shelter from contaminated households
 - Ideally, bathe with a non-toxic detergent (e.g. Dawn) or shampoo.
 - If bathing is not possible, spray or dip the coat with an accelerated hydrogen peroxide product (AHP – e.g. Rescue/Accel).
 - If neither bathing nor spraying with AHP can be done, then use gloves and gown to handle the pet for the first 3 days.
- Immediately disinfect surfaces in common use areas where exposed animals have been in contact.
- Isolate the pet in a room designated only for similarly exposed animals, away from the general population and away from other serious diseases (parvo, distemper).
- Post signage on the kennel identifying the pet, its exposure and “Do Not Touch”.
- Take the pet outside for elimination/exercise but do not allow direct contact with other animals.
- Monitor each animal closely for signs of illness and report to the Department of Public Health immediately if you notice signs.
- Designate limited staff that have access to this room for feeding, cleaning, and medical care – to limit how much of the virus could be spread to different parts of the shelter.
- Clean the designated room last in relation to the entire shelter population. Use personal protective equipment when cleaning or spraying.
- Follow shelter protocols for standard disinfection of the kennel or run and items that have been in contact with the animal (food and water bowls, bedding, toys, etc.).
- Follow shelter protocols for standard disinfection of the truck used to transport the animal.
- Release the pet to the owner as soon as possible (returning an exposed pet does not increase the risk of disease to the household from which it came).

Strategies to divert intake of animals from the shelter

- Prioritize fieldwork for animal control officers.
 - Impound injured, sick, biting or dangerous animals as high priority.
 - Consider healthy community/stray cats and healthy stray animals as lower priority.
 - Return animals to owners in the field when possible (do not bring them to the shelter).
- Deliver supplies (food, equipment) to owners at home to help them retain their pet in their household.
- Encourage owner surrenders to keep their pets at home with resources for intervention and teach them how to market their pets themselves with social media.
- Expedite approval of foster applicants and consolidate all foster care resources – try to get as many animals out to foster care as possible.
- Encourage or train all staff and volunteers to use social media to market pets (both inside and outside of the shelter).