

COVID-19 and Dogs

FAQ AND RESOURCES

CAN DOGS GET THE NEW CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?

At this time, experts believe it is very unlikely. The World Health Organization currently advises that there is no evidence to suggest that dogs or cats can be infected with the new coronavirus. The CDC also seconds that opinion, stating that, “At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can spread COVID-19.”

IF EXPERTS BELIEVE IT IS UNLIKELY FOR A DOG TO GET COVID-19, HOW DID A DOG TEST “POSITIVE” IN HONG KONG?

This canine patient was in close contact with an infected human, who was likely shedding large quantities of the virus. This led to the virus being in the dog’s nose. There is no indication that the dog is sick or showing any symptoms. Authorities say they will continue to quarantine and test the dog to evaluate if the canine patient becomes ill. In short, there was coronavirus on the dog just like there was coronavirus on the floor in the room, but the dog was not infected or diseased.

March 3, 2020 update: Hong Kong Health Authorities and the World Organization for Animal Health announced that this canine patient has subsequently tested “weak” positive once again for Covid-19 while in quarantine. This is an expected result as the virus is maintained for a long time in the environment and the testing that is used is very sensitive. It is important to understand that the testing used does not determine if the virus that is detected is live or only small parts of the inactivated virus that the test is designed to detect.

IS THERE A COVID-19 VACCINE FOR DOGS AND CATS?

There is no vaccine for COVID-19 for people or animals at this time.

Veterinarians are familiar with other coronaviruses. Similar but different coronavirus species cause several common diseases in domestic animals. Many dogs, for example, are vaccinated for another species of coronavirus (Canine Coronavirus) as puppies. However, this vaccine does not cross protect for COVID-19.

WHAT ANIMAL DID COVID-19 ORIGINATE FROM?

Current research suggests that bats are the reservoir species and the virus originated from that species as well. Previous human coronavirus outbreaks, SARS and MERS, originated in other species, such as the palm civet and camels.

IF I AM DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19, HOW DO I PROTECT MY PET?

Since your pet is not at risk of COVID-19 infection there are no specific steps needed to protect them from infection. However, pets can have the virus ON THEM if they are in an environment with a large quantity of the virus and could serve to be a source of the virus for other people, including family members. Therefore, to protect other people and yourself, the CDC recommends that you restrict contact with pets if you are sick with COVID-19,



just as you would restrict your contact with other people. Avoid snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must interact with your pet, wash your hands before and after, and wear a face mask.

SHOULD MY PET WEAR A FACE MASK IN PUBLIC?

No. Face masks may not protect your pet from disease transmission and may cause other breathing difficulties.

HOW DO I PROTECT MY PET AND MYSELF FROM COVID-19?

Since your pet is not at risk of COVID-19 infection there are no specific steps needed to protect them from infection.

To protect yourself the CDC recommends the following steps:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds!
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Avoid close contact with sick people.
4. Stay home when you are sick.
5. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw it away.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
7. Voluntary home isolation: If you are ill with symptoms of respiratory disease, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue, stay home. The CDC recommends that you remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100 degrees F) or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
8. Veterinary practices should designate their clinic as a temporary NO HANDSHAKE ZONE. Ask colleagues and clients to refrain from shaking hands.

Sources

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** THIS FACT SHEET IS based on University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine resources

