



Frequently Asked Questions about Animal Health Issues During COVID-19 Pandemic

October 2021

FAQ: General Public

I need to license my dog, but I can't get a rabies vaccination from my primary veterinarian. Are rabies vaccines essential?

Yes, rabies vaccines are essential to protect both human and animal health. With the decreasing number of cases of COVID-19 in NJ, and the ending of the state of emergency, it should be easier to find veterinary hospitals and vaccine clinics that are open. If your veterinarian is unable to accommodate your request, call other veterinarians in your vicinity to ensure your pet remains up to date with his/her rabies vaccination. You can also contact your municipality and ask about local rabies clinics.

Is COVID-19 viable on my pet's fur?

Although we know certain bacteria and fungi can be carried on fur and hair, there is no evidence that viruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19, can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets. Do NOT wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use. It is important to practice good hand hygiene, which includes washing your hands for 20 seconds after touching your pet, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

For more information on COVID-19 and pets, please see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pages:

For People with Pets: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html>

Frequently Asked Questions- scroll down to the Pets and Animals section:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#COVID-19-and-Animals>

Can I catch COVID-19 from my pets?

At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to people. Based on the information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to practice [healthy habits](#) around pets and other animals, such as washing your hands and maintaining good hygiene. For more information, please visit the CDC's [If You Have Pets](#) page.

I was diagnosed with COVID-19. Will my pets catch it from me?

It appears that in some situations the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from people to animals. If a person inside the household becomes sick, isolate that person from everyone else, including pets and other animals. If possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you must care for your pets while you are sick, limit contact with your pet, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets, and wear a mask.

What should I do if I think my pet has the virus that causes COVID-19?

There are a small number of animals around the world reported to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including four cats and one dog in New Jersey. Some pets who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 have not had any symptoms. Of those pets that did have symptoms, most cases were mild and could be managed at home. At this time, routine testing of pets for SARS-CoV-2 is not recommended. Talk to your veterinarian about any health concerns you have about your pets. If your pet gets sick after having contact with a person with COVID-19, let the veterinarian know that the pet was around someone with COVID-19. Some veterinarians may offer telemedicine consultations or other plans for seeing sick pets.

What precautions should I take to protect my pets?

A small number of pets worldwide, including dogs and cats, have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19. To protect your pet from becoming infected with the virus:

- Pet owners and every eligible person in the household should get vaccinated.
- People with COVID-19 should not have contact with pets.
- Pet owners should not allow pets to have contact with unvaccinated people outside the household, if possible.

Do NOT wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use. Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about appropriate products for bathing or cleaning your pet. If your pet gets hand sanitizer on their skin or fur, rinse or wipe down your pet with water immediately. If your pet ingests hand sanitizer (such as by chewing the bottle) or is showing signs of illness after use, contact your veterinarian or pet poison control immediately. Talk to your veterinarian if your pet gets sick, or if you have any concerns about your pet's health.

Is there a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine for pets?

At this time there are no vaccines approved for the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 infection in pets.

Can I take my dog to a dog park?

Dog parks provide socialization and exercise for dogs, which is an important part of their wellbeing.

There are ways to reduce the risk of you or your dog getting infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, if you do go to a dog park:

- Do not take your dog to a dog park if you are [sick](#) or if you have recently been in close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Do not take your dog to a dog park if your dog is sick. Signs of sickness in dogs may include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, discharge from the nose or eyes, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If your dog has [tested positive](#) for the virus that causes COVID-19, talk to your veterinarian about when it is appropriate for your pet to go back to normal activities.

FAQ: Animal Professionals

I own a veterinary hospital, and I want to close my business for now, because I am immunocompromised. What should I do?

If you close your hospital, the NJ Veterinary Hospital Manager's Association (NJVHMA) suggests the following ways to serve your clients:

- Have information about the closest emergency clinic on your voicemail, business entrances, and website.
- Send an email notification of the closure to all clients and include information about the closest emergency clinic.

What resources are available for health and safety recommendations in veterinary practices during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The NJ Division of Consumer Affairs has guidance on health and safety best practices for veterinary facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/vet>).

I am a veterinarian, and I need information on testing my patients for the virus that causes COVID-19.

At this time, routine testing for SARS-CoV-2 for pets is not recommended. To discuss SARS-CoV-2 testing, veterinarians should contact NJDOH during daytime hours at (609) 826-4872 or (609) 826-5964 or email zoonoticrn@doh.nj.gov. Please see our website for more information, including criteria for testing, and clinical signs that may be seen with pets infected with the virus:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_Domestic_Companion_Animals.pdf