



# MISSOURI

dept. of

# Agriculture

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## VETERINARIANS AND COVID-19

### What do we know about COVID-19 and domestic animals?

There are very few cases domestic animals testing positive within the United States for COVID-19. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals can spread COVID-19 to people. It is important that pet owners continue practicing good hygiene during and after handling animals. Soft surfaces, such as fur or hair, don't transfer viruses as well as hard surfaces.

### How can veterinarians maintain social distancing with clients?

Consider telehealth or telemedicine in your veterinary practice for established clients with a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationships. If your client is ill, consider postponing the visit if it's a non-essential appointment. In emergency situations, ask the client to have a healthy person meet you for the appointment. Discuss care and follow-up with the client by phone.

Consider the workflow at your facility to create methods to maintain social distancing. Ideas include:

- **Curbside medicine:** the building may be closed to clients who remain in their cars while pets are taken in and out by staff, and discussions about care are conducted over the phone
- **Telemedicine appointment:** use these for established clients with valid veterinarian-client-patient-relationships, when medically appropriate
- **Social distancing:** use temporary measures to mark out 6 foot distances to follow CDC guidelines on [How to Protect Yourself](#) in the lobby or exam rooms



### How can I protect myself and my staff?

Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for each situation. For routine visits, we recommend wearing gloves for working with animals. Be sure to ask your clients if they have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been in close contact with anyone who has. If they have tested positive, reschedule non-emergency visits or evaluate the animal in a different room. Only healthy individuals should bring animals to your clinic or be present during an examination. As always, wash your hands before and after each visit and routinely throughout the day.

## **How should veterinary facilities handle animals during the COVID-19 outbreak?**

If an animal is healthy or is presenting for non-respiratory illness, staff should wear gloves when handling patients, reduce patient contact to only what is necessary and practice excellent hand hygiene before and after handling patients.

Although very few companion animals have become ill with COVID-19, staff should follow the above guidelines, along with eye protection, a face covering and a gown or lab coat, if an animal shows signs of a respiratory infection. Additional caution should be used if the animal comes from a household with a COVID-19 infected person. After typical respiratory pathogens have been ruled out, testing for the virus that causes COVID-19 could be considered.

## **How should my equipment be cleaned and disinfected?**

Standard cleaning and disinfection protocols will kill the virus that causes COVID-19. Be sure to follow the correct contact time and dilution instructions for the products you use. Focus additional disinfection on high contact and high touch surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, keyboards and equipment.

## **Do I need to notify the State Veterinarian if I see an animal from a premise where someone is ill with COVID-19?**

No, you do not need to let the State Veterinarian know about each of these instances. However, we are available if you have questions.

## **What if one of my employees becomes ill with COVID-19?**

Veterinary personnel should not work while ill, whether it is COVID-19 or another illness. At this time, close contacts of people who test positive for COVID-19 are being assessed for their potential risk. In this situation, recommendations may be made to reduce potential spread of COVID-19. Your clinic may be contacted by the Department of Agriculture in these rare situations.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

### **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians**

[Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](#)

### **American Veterinary Medical Association**

[Animal Health and Welfare: COVID-19](#)

### **Missouri Department of Agriculture**

[COVID-19 Resources](#)



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## **Animal Health Division**

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