

Taken from UW Madison Website

Protocol for shelter intake of pets from households where humans with coronavirus are present

In order to implement a sheltering protocol for COVID-19 exposed pets will be considered exposed and a potential fomite

1. In the anticipation of an animal service agency being requested to assist at the home of an infected person, agencies should work closely with their public health department to plan for reducing the risk to staff.
 1. Whenever possible, animals should be collected with minimal contact with residents and sick people while avoiding entry into the home.
 2. Public health officials can recommend needed PPE to reduce risk to animal services staff and training in the proper use of such equipment.
2. As with any new intake, gloves and gowns should be worn while doing intake exams and treatments.
 - a. This is a good practice predating the emergence of COVID-19.
 - b. Hands should be washed with soap and water after gloves are removed and discarded, and the intake area is sanitized.
 - c. Gowns do not need to be single-use and can be laundered and re-used (see comment on PPE below).
3. Bathing/ reducing fomite potential- there is currently no evidence that pets serve as fomites with the potential to spread the infection to humans- but in an abundance of caution- bathing could reduce any potential.
 - . Dogs- Bathing dogs on admission with any shampoo is likely to remove any virus present on the haircoat, as hand washing does for human hands.
 - i. Low-stress handling is a priority. Anxiolytic medication can help facilitate fear-free handling and stress mitigation.
 - a. Cats- Because cats are more challenging to bathe, groom themselves regularly, and do not require walking outside for exercise/elimination bathing may not be in the best interest of the cats or caregivers. See below for animal handling precautions.
4. Animal housing- until more information is known, dogs and cats exposed to COVID-19 infection may be best housed in an area separate from the rest of the shelter population, in double-sided housing that is spot cleaned as needed when soiled.
 - . *The only current recommendation from OIE is to keep animals that have tested positive for COVID-19 separate from unexposed animals. There is only one documented report of a dog that has tested positive. Diagnostic testing for companion animals is currently not readily available.*
5. Animal handling
 - . Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - i. Current shortages in commercially available PPE may cause a crisis due to the overwhelming need in the human healthcare field.

- ii. It is unknown if there is a risk from pets to humans, so it is unclear if PPE is needed or beneficial in reducing the risk to humans. Because of the seriousness and uncertainty of this illness, some level of PPE is recommended.
 - iii. The use of protective clothing (e.g. coveralls) that can be laundered, and dedicated footwear (e.g. boots) is an alternative that may be preferable to reserve disposable PPE for those situations of high risk (preventing human to human transmission). The use of gloves to limit exposure is also recommended.
 - iv. At this time there is no indication for the use of face masks by healthy animal caregivers.
 - 1. The use of facemasks is to reduce transmission between people via respiratory droplets which are unlikely in the absence of clinical signs.
 - 2. Current CDC recommendations are for facemasks to be worn by people who are sick or when caring for sick people (if they are not able to wear a face themselves).
 - 3. Facemasks should be saved for sick individuals and their caregivers as they may be in short supply.
 - a. Washing hands with soap and water after handling animals is always recommended.
 - b. Dogs should be walked outside for elimination and exercise but direct contact with other animals should be avoided.
 - c. *If an organization decides to handle exposed animals as potential fomites only.*
 - i. Bathing is likely adequate to remove the virus from the haircoat.
 - ii. An alternative to bathing is to handle them while wearing gowns and gloves for the first 3 days of their care to reduce the potential for fomite transmission of the virus.
 - 1. Three days is the most conservative estimate based on [recent environmental isolation studies](#) that found that SARS CoV-2 did not persist on stainless steel beyond 3 days or 24 hours on cardboard.
6. Duration of segregation- it is unknown if segregation is needed and if so, for how long. This is dependent on the decision if the pet is considered exposed only, exposed/potential fomite, or potentially infected and capable of transmission. Diagnostic testing would assist in the decision-making process and risk assessment. Efforts to develop more accessible diagnostic testing for animals are underway. Even though it appears likely that the risk is very low it is prudent to maintain separation until more specific information is available.
7. Sanitation- coronaviruses are readily inactivated by disinfectants typically used in animal shelters, including accelerated hydrogen peroxide at concentrations used for other more common shelter pathogens (e.g. 1:64 (2 oz/gallon) for 5 minutes for coronaviruses, 1:32 (4 oz/ gallon) for 10 min. for parvoviruses). Normal cleaning/disinfection protocols for both animal housing and common areas used in shelters are sufficient. Increased sanitation of surfaces frequently touched by people is recommended to reduce exposure to/ from humans.

- . Disinfectants licensed by the EPA must be used in accordance with their label directions. Many disinfectants have the potential to cause significant harm if direct contact with human or animal skin occurs. It is inappropriate (and potentially illegal if not labeled accordingly) to apply liquid disinfectants directly onto animals.
8. Testing- at this time COVID-19 diagnostic testing for pets is not readily available. Consultation with public health authorities to determine when testing is indicated and how to do that is recommended.
 9. If an animal develops respiratory disease during their shelter stay, animal shelters should work with their public health authorities to determine if testing and further precautions are warranted.
 10. Release-there is no current reason to believe that releasing an exposed pet back to the family/source of exposure increases the risk to humans and every effort should be made to promptly reunite pets with their owners.