



Shelter Medicine
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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Boots on the ground: Caring for COVID-19 exposed pets in shelters

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Questions

- What should I know if I'm caring for COVID-19 exposed pets in a shelter?
- What if I touch them?
- Can it be carried on fur?
- Why 14 days?
- What if a pet from COVID-19 positive home bites me?
- What if a pet from COVID-19 exposed home licks me?
- Is it carried in their poop?
- Has any person gotten COVID-19 from a cat or dog?

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Goals during the pandemic

- Keep humans safe
- Support social distancing and #safeathome for humans.
- Responsibly assess what is essential.
- Limit the use of medical and surgical supplies.
- Limit use of PPE needed in the human health care field.
- Maintain operations that are essential to care for animals and support pet owners.

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Key concepts

- Now is the time to have a only small population of animals in shelters.
- Pets are integral members of a family and should stay at home with their owners.
- **The greatest risk to humans is from human to human transmission.**
- Pets are **NOT** playing an epidemiologic role in this outbreak.
- A small number of pets have been infected but no evidence yet that pets can transmit the virus back to humans.
- Pets should socially distance along with their owners.
- Owners who are sick should isolate from their pets as they would from any other member of their family.

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Abundance of caution

- Means when we don't have all the answers we choose the safest path
- Means we think we might be over-reacting
- Best action to take when some things are still unknown
- Because we'd rather back off later than say we should have done more.

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Action items:

- Limit intake to emergencies!
 - Sick, injured, dangerous, endangered
- Leave in place
 - Healthy cats and kittens
 - Unweaned and kittens in good health
- Provide a balance of outcomes for the intake that comes.
- Only essential spay neuter.
- Follow recommendations for handling exposed animals.
- Staff in split teams to better ensure care.

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Community action items and messaging

- People should prepare a plan for who will care for their pet in the event they are hospitalized or cannot provide care.
- Shelters and communities should work to support the human animal bond, keeping animals with their families whenever possible
- Communities should plan together for handling exposed animals who will present to shelters.

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Testing considerations

- Still many unknowns about animals, exposure, infection, and transmission.
- Knowledge helps to dispel fear.
- Testing is not generally recommended.
- Only a VERY small number of animals have tested positive.

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Key Points from recommendations made collaboratively by the CDC, AVMA, and Shelter Medicine Programs

- Stay safe if collecting animals from sick people's homes
- Utilize gloves and re-usable PPE (gowns, coveralls, footwear, masks)
- Bathing is not necessary
 - No evidence to support animals can be fomites
- House exposed animals separately from general population
- Allow dogs to be walked outside for exercise and elimination
- Limit close contact with humans
- Avoid direct contact with other animals
- Sanitation as usually recommended, spot cleaning preferred
- Once in shelter, hold for 14 days prior to adoption or foster

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- Why 14 days?

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- Is it carried in their poop?

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Other questions?

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Thank you for all you're doing!
Please stay safe.

