

Veterinary Facilities and COVID-19

What we know about COVID-19 and pets

- At this time, there is no evidence pets play a role in spreading COVID-19 to people.
- There are reports of cats and dogs infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. To date, most cases in pets occurred after close contact with infected people. It's very important to protect pets by limiting their contact with people who are either suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) maintains a list of all animals with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infections in the United States found on their website:

[Confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 in Animals in the United States](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/sa_one_health/sars-cov-2-animals-us)

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/sa_one_health/sars-cov-2-animals-us

- Pets with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test should be isolated from individuals without COVID-19 and pets who are not infected with SARS-CoV-2.

How veterinary facilities can maintain physical distancing with clients

Consider the workflow at your facility and implement methods that maintain physical distance. Possible ideas include:

- Curbside medicine: Rather than allowing clients into your facility, have clients remain in their cars while pets are taken into and out of your facility by staff. Conduct discussions about care via phone.
- Telemedicine: Consider virtual appointments for established clients with valid veterinarian-client-patient-relationships.

How veterinary facilities should handle animals during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Patient physical contact should be limited to only what is necessary, and staff should always wash their hands before and after handling patients.
- If an animal appears healthy **and** has had no known exposure to people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, staff can exercise normal precautions.
- If an animal presents with clinical signs consistent with SARS-CoV-2 infection, staff should put on additional personal protective equipment (PPE), including facemask, eye protection, gloves and a gown or lab coat. Take off and/or discard the PPE after the animal has left the facility.
- Refer to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Toolkit: One Health Approach to Address Companion Animals with SARS-CoV-2](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/toolkit.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/toolkit.html>) for additional recommendations for addressing companion animals with SARS-CoV-2.

How exam rooms and treatment areas should be cleaned and disinfected

- Standard cleaning and disinfection products and protocols can kill SARS-CoV-2. Be sure to follow the correct contact time and dilution instructions for the products you use.
- Focus cleaning and disinfecting on high-contact and high-touch surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, keyboards, exam room tables and counters, and equipment.

If a client has COVID-19 and their animal requires veterinary care

- If a client informs you they have tested positive for COVID-19, recommend a healthy person bring in the animal. If this is not possible, have the client stay in their car, and send a staff member with appropriate PPE (facemask, eye protection, gloves, and gown or lab coat) to bring the pet into the clinic.

Testing for the virus that causes COVID-19

- Routine testing of animals for the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is not currently recommended.
- For pets with clinical signs consistent with SARS-CoV-2 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, lethargy, sneezing, ocular/nasal discharge), veterinarians are strongly encouraged to rule out more typical respiratory pathogens first.
- Testing should be considered for animals with consistent clinical signs and a history of close contact with a person confirmed to be infected with COVID-19.

- For information on animal testing see the Minnesota Board of Animal health factsheet: [Testing companion animals and livestock for COVID-19](https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/COVID19_SamplingAnimals.pdf) (https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/COVID19_SamplingAnimals.pdf)

Prevent clinic staff from becoming infected with COVID-19

- Prepare a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for your facility. A template is available at: [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp>).
- Perform daily employee screening for symptoms of COVID-19 for every employee at the beginning of every shift. Immediately ask employees with symptoms to leave the workplace and encourage and facilitate COVID-19 testing.
- Require all personnel to wear cotton facemasks or disposable surgical masks at all times and use other appropriate PPE as indicated.
- Make operational and physical changes to accommodate physical distancing between personnel.
- For more information: [MDH Businesses and Employers: COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html>).

One of my employees becomes ill with COVID-19

- An employee who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, shortness of breath, etc.) should seek testing and stay home until the test results are available.
- If an employee tests positive for the virus, they must self-isolate at home until their symptoms have improved, *and* it has been at least 10 days since the first symptom occurred, *and* they have been fever-free for three days without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If a staff member tests positive for COVID-19, your facility may be contacted to assess the risk to co-workers who had concerning exposures to the case. Concerning exposure means having been exposed for 15 or more minutes within 6 feet of an individual who tested positive, without the use of full PPE (mask, face shield or eye protection, gloves, and protective outerwear). Employers are advised to contact the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-5414 for assistance.

Latest Updates and Additional Resources

The COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly and this guidance may be updated as needed.

- Situation updates from MDH [Situation Update for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html) webpage and CDC [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html) webpage.
- [Minnesota Board of Animal Health Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](http://www.bah.state.mn.us/covid-19/) (www.bah.state.mn.us/covid-19/)
- [Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine](http://mn.gov/boards/veterinary-medicine/) (mn.gov/boards/veterinary-medicine/)

VETERINARY FACILITIES AND COVID-19

- [Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association \(https://www.mvma.org/\)](https://www.mvma.org/)
- [American Veterinary Medical Association: COVID-19 \(www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19\)](http://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19)



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7/10/2020