



COVID-19 GUIDANCE: For Private Pet Owners

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes that pets are a significant part of our families and communities; plans should be in place at an individual and community level, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PA Department of Agriculture has sourced the following guidelines to help pet owners protect both themselves and their pets during the COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low.

More studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19.

We are still learning about this virus, but it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations.

- Symptoms of COVID-19 in pets includes fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, nose or eye discharge, vomiting, or diarrhea. If your pet exhibits symptoms after contact with a person positive for COVID-19, contact your private veterinarian.

At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading COVID-19 to people. COVID-19 is mainly spread through person-to-person contact.

Pet owners should make plans for what would happen if they get sick.

Owners are encouraged to buy pet food and supplies as they normally would, without stockpiling, so that all pet owners can continue to have reliable access. Pet food manufacturers and distributors are considered life-sustaining businesses and can remain operational but should practice social distancing and review best practices for [grocery stores](#) and [delivery networks](#). The department encourages pet owners to reach out to neighbors who may be experiencing hardships during COVID-19 mitigation and help as able, while practicing social distancing. Pet owners that may experience hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic can consider seeking long-term foster care. A list of pet food pantries is available at agriculture.pa.gov/covid.

We encourage pet owners to follow these key points:

- Avoid contact with pets and other animals, as you would other people.
- Avoid contact such as petting, holding, snuggling, facial contact, and sleeping in the same bed.
- Identify a family member or friend who can care for pets if someone in the household becomes ill.
- Wear a mask and wash your hands before feeding or tending to your pet if you are unable to find alternative care for them.
- Have crates, food, and extra supplies on hand for quick movement of pets.
- Practice social distancing when walking or exercising pets.
- If your pets have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, it is recommended to give them a bath and limit contact with anyone under quarantine.
- Pet owners are reminded to wash hands frequently throughout the day with hot water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Be sure all vaccines are up to date in the event boarding becomes necessary.
 - Have proof of current vaccinations.
 - If you do not have paperwork, contact your veterinarian for records (a digital copy on a mobile device is acceptable proof).
 - Failure to have proof of current vaccinations could result in your dog needing revaccinated.
- Ensure medications are documented with dosages and administration directions, including the prescription and the contact information for your veterinarian.
- Pets should have identification: collar with dog license and rabies tag or any other vanity style tag with owner information. Information can also be placed on the pet's cage depending, on the type of pet.
- Place a list of pets in the home on your front door for emergency responders. Include a description of each animal, location in home or on the property, and any other pertinent information specific to each animal.

Additional resources:

- [Disaster Plan Making for Pets](#)
- [Pet Disaster Preparedness from the CDC](#)
- [PA State Animal Response Team \(SART\) is on standby for emergency services](#)
- [Facts from the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association about COVID-19](#)
- [Steps to expand foster networks during this critical time](#)