



PRESS RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 and Your Pets
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The corona virus pandemic has left many worried about the safety of their pets and whether or not the virus can be transmitted to/from their pets. This is especially true given the recent news that the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has been confirmed in a tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo. According to Dr. Paige Brock, veterinarian at the Bronx zoo, the tiger was showing mild symptoms, responded to treatment, and has recovered. It is believed the animal contracted the illness from a zoo employee who was actively shedding the virus. Infectious disease experts and multiple international and domestic human and animal health organizations **agree that at this time there is no evidence that domestic animals, including pets and livestock, can spread COVID-19 to people.** There have been no reports of pets or livestock becoming ill with COVID-19 in the U.S., and only four reported cases in the world of dogs and cats testing positive for the virus. We would be seeing many more cases in feline pets if the virus were spreading by way of domestic animals. (There are dog- specific and cat-specific corona viruses that have been around for years, and these viruses ONLY infect dogs and cats, not humans). The larger concern is humans spreading COVID-19 to pets, not the other way around.

We know that in people, transmission primarily occurs when there is contact with an infected person's bodily secretions, such as saliva or mucus droplets in a cough or sneeze. Transmission via touching a pet who has been sneezed or coughed on by an infected person is less likely because fibrous pet fur can absorb and trap the virus, making it harder to contract through simple touch.

Veterinary medicine has been deemed an essential service in Vermont and most clinics remain open and veterinarians are ready to answer your questions. Most veterinarians are protecting you and your pets by wearing gowns, masks and gloves and asking you to stay in your cars and call when you arrive at the clinic. While these requirements are frustrating to some, they are necessary precautions to protect you, your pets, and the veterinary staff.

What's a worried pet owner to do? Don't panic! **If you are not ill with COVID-19** social distancing and sheltering in place doesn't apply to your pets. In fact, you'll have more time than ever to enjoy them so interact with them as you normally would, including

walking, feeding, and playing. You should continue to practice good hygiene during those interactions (e.g., wash hands with soap and water before and after interacting with your pet; ensure your pet is kept well-groomed; regularly clean your pet's food and water bowls, bedding material, and toys).

And please do follow the CDC guidance for humans who are **ill with COVID-19**:

- Limit contact with animals.
- Have another member of your household take care of walking, feeding, and playing with your pet.
- If you have a service animal or you must care for your pet, then wear a facemask; don't share food, kiss, or hug them; and wash your hands before and after any contact with them.

While we are recommending these as good practices, it is important to remember that COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is being spread from person-to-person. Pets and livestock are not playing any role in transmission of the disease. We love our pets and it's our job to limit their exposure to the virus.

For up to date information on COVID-19 and pets as well as FAQs, please visit the website of the American Veterinary Medical Association (www.avma.org).

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) is a professional organization of 385 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.