

We understand the importance of having safe reliable access to pet healthcare and we are open to any concerns or requests clients have to facilitate that access, within our means. Likewise, we will endeavor to remain open and accessible through the initial phases of the viral infection in the USA in a manner consistent with CDC and WHO recommendations. If anything changes we will update our clients and the public accordingly.

As your veterinarian we feel it our responsibility to advise our clients and public on best scientific practices regarding the health of your pet and yourself when attending veterinary hospitals. We put together a pertinent FAQ for our clients specific to novel coronavirus.

Can dogs get the new coronavirus (COVID-19)?

At this time, experts believe it is very unlikely. The World Health Organization currently advises that there is **no** evidence to suggest that dogs or cats can be infected with the new coronavirus. The OIE states there is no evidence that dogs play a role in the spread of this disease or that they become sick. The CDC also seconds that opinion, stating that, "At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can spread COVID-19."

Although it is unlikely that pets can become sick from COVID-19, could they serve as a conduit of infection between people?

Yes. It is possible that a person with COVID-19 could sneeze or otherwise contaminate their pet, and then another individual could touch that animal and contract the disease. Veterinary experts believe the **risk for transmission would be low**. However, animals living with sick individuals should be kept away from other people and animals (quarantined at home), just as people who live with sick individuals must avoid contact with others.

Should I wear a face mask?

Wearing a surgical mask will not completely prevent anyone (human or animal) from being exposed to the virus. A mask should be used to prevent someone that is potentially infectious from spreading the virus to others via droplets through coughing, sneezing, or talking. An exception to this is for caregivers of infected persons who are forced to have close contact may benefit from a face mask to prevent breathing in particulates in conjunction with the below recommendations.

How is the virus spread most commonly?

Experts are continuing to investigate this question but current research shows the virus is most commonly spread the same way most our common flu and cold viruses are, through people who are in close contact with one another (less than 6 feet) or breathing in droplets from an infected person coughing. It is also thought that some transmission happens via shedding of virus from infected person (i.e. coughing) to surfaces which are then picked by another person via direct contact with the same surface and that person touching a mucus membrane or food going directly into one. But this is thought to be less common. Washing your hands and avoiding touching mucus membranes (eyes, nose, mouth) is the best safety precaution for non-infected person other than avoiding close contact with infected persons.

Likewise, infected persons should wear masks to prevent the spread of disease. Masks keep droplets from spreading out over surfaces and other people.

To protect yourself the CDC recommends the following steps:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds!
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Avoid close contact with sick people.
4. Stay home when you are sick.
5. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw it away.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
7. Voluntary home isolation: If you are ill with symptoms of respiratory disease, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue = stay home. The CDC recommends that you remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100 degrees F) or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

To minimize public health risk and economic impact of this virus it is important to simply follow these 7 steps to stay safe.

We also have developed the following protocols based on best scientific information to help our clients feel comfortable and safe at our clinic.

1. We will wipe all public use contact surfaces such as door handles, chairs, and reception counter tops 4-6 X per days with a cleaner that has been proven effective against not only Coronavirus but other common contagions. Coincidentally this is the same cleaner we use on a daily basis and have simply increased our cleaning protocols. Rescue is the name of the cleaner.
2. We will make our vet clinic a temporary "Hand shake free zone"
3. Remove children's toys from waiting room.
4. Require any staff member with fever to remain at home until fever free >24 hours.
5. We ask owners who are sick and or running a fever to forgo preventative wellness care for their pet until they feel better. Cancellations of appointments for illness will definitely be excused and appreciated.
6. If owner is sick and their pet needs emergency care we ask that owner have another person bring pet in for appointment. If this is not possible we ask that owner inform us of illness at time of making the appointment, remain in their vehicle and call us when arriving. We will come out to their vehicle to receive pet into hospital and obtain any history, consent, and provide necessary communications to owners at their vehicle.
7. We will strive to disinfect credit card processing machine (where you sign) after each use.
8. Any client coughing in the reception area will be asked to wait in their vehicle until their appointed time.
9. We already disinfect exam rooms between each appointment and will continue to do so.
10. We already provide approved hand sanitizer to clients at reception desk.