



# Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson  
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## **FAQs about COVID-19 and Companion Animals (Pets)**

### **Can pets (dogs, cats, ferrets) be infected with COVID-19?**

*At present, it is not thought that cats, dogs, and ferrets can become ill from infection with COVID-19. Experts also do not think that pets can spread the disease. Nevertheless, much is still unknown about the virus. Researchers are not sure if pets may be colonized by the virus, despite not getting sick. At this time, there is no evidence that pets can temporarily harbor virus on the coat and other areas of the pet's body; however, it might be a good idea to bathe the animal with a pet shampoo to remove any virus particles if they are present on their coat.*

*Pets have other types of coronaviruses that can make them sick, like canine and feline coronaviruses. These other coronaviruses cannot infect people and are not related to the current COVID-19 outbreak. However, because all animals can carry other germs that can make people sick, it's always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, such as washing your hands.*

### **Do I need to get my pet tested for COVID-19?**

*No. At this time, routine testing of animals for COVID-19 is not recommended. Because the situation is ever-evolving, public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals out of an abundance of caution. The decision to test will be made collaboratively between local, state or federal public and animal health officials. See the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) guidance, [USDA Guidance on Companion Animal Testing](#).*

### **I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. What should I do with my pet?**

*While much is still unknown about this virus, no evidence indicates that companion animals, including pets, can get sick from or spread COVID-19. However, because we are still learning about this virus, we recommend that pets that have been in contact with COVID-19 patients should also remain in the home during the isolation period. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you avoid contact with your pet. You should ask another family member to care for the pet for at least 14 days from your diagnosis or onset of illness. The caretaker should also ensure precautions are taken to avoid interactions with other animals or people; dogs should be walked regularly, but not taken to dog parks or pet supply stores.*

**What if no one else can care for your pet?**

*If it is impossible for anyone other than the person infected with COVID-19 to care for the pet, it is recommended that the patient avoid “close” contact (petting, snuggling, kissing, being licked, sharing food, etc.). It may be a good idea to don a surgical mask when in close proximity to the pet, and even wear gloves. When contact with the pet or the pet’s items (food bowl, bedding, etc.) is necessary, frequent and thorough handwashing before and after contact is recommended.*

**What if the person infected with COVID-19 is hospitalized and unable to provide care?**

*If no other family member or friend can care for the pet in the home, the animal can be boarded (veterinary clinic, animal shelter, boarding facility).*

**What if the pet requires veterinary care?**

*If a pet requires veterinary care, contact your veterinarian ahead of time for guidance. Follow your veterinarian’s guidance before taking your pet to the veterinary clinic.*

**What about service or therapy animals?**

*If possible, service animals should remain with their handlers during the isolation period. It may be necessary for the patient to be in close contact with these animals. In such cases, adherence with the precautions stated above is advised.*

**References:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html>

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA\\_One\\_Health](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_One_Health)

<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/covid-19-guidance-for-veterinarians>

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>

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