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## **Pets and COVID-19**

Well this world got very different in a very short period of time. Is everyone doing ok? Hang in there and take care of each other. Speak to your health care provider if you have any questions regarding yourself and COVID-19. As a veterinarian, however, I'm going to convey information of what we know about pets and COVID-19. Most of this information is from the AVMA, the CDC and infectious disease expert, Dr. Scott Weese.

It is important to know that there are different types of corona viruses and different species have their own virus. Dogs do have a corona virus that occurs both as a respiratory form and an intestinal form which typically cause self-limiting illness. There are DNA tests which your veterinarian can screen for BUT they are NOT the same thing as COVID-19. While DNA tests are HIGHLY sensitive and can detect bits and fragments but it does not sequence the virus.

- At this time, multiple infectious disease experts, veterinarians, viral scientists still agree that there is no evidence that dogs can spread the virus to other animals or humans. However, all still agree that it is always a good policy to practice good hygiene. To wash your hands, do not touch your face before AND after ANY interactions with animals.

We do not know exactly if the virus survives on haircoats of pets. If someone infected touches or coughs on a pet, maybe the virus will be present for a few hours on their fur but we are not sure yet. As a general rule, the fur is considered a porous surface and is less likely to transmit viruses as compared to non-porous surfaces like counters, door knobs, keyboards...

- This is also a reason practice good hygiene and wash your hands, do not touch your face before AND after ANY interactions with animals.

There is no information available regarding cats or other pets or livestock and COVID-19. We do however know that pigs, ferrets and cats may have receptors for this virus to bind. We do not know if this can then be transmitted to people but

- stay away from the barn, cats, ferrets and pigs if you are infected or at risk.

If you happen to become infected with the COVID-19 virus, out of abundance of caution, the AVMA recommends you limit interactions with animals and let another family member take care of your pet. If you have a service animal or you are the only person to care for your pet, don't share your food, do not kiss or hug them and wash your hands before and after any contact.

- In order to prepare, make sure you have 2 weeks of pet food available in the event you are not able to care for your pet so that another may be able to help you.

Certainly, do not hesitate to reach out to your vet if your pet is sick or needs attention! We are here to help! You can still take your pet to the vet as long as you are not feeling sick or been knowingly exposed to the virus. All hospitals in the area have taken precautions and adopted a "drop-off at the door" policy to observe the social distancing precaution.

- If it is a situation that is not emergent (such as annual exams, routine vaccines, elective procedures), please wait to schedule the appointment with your veterinarian.

This is a different world right now. Hopefully, in a few months we can all go back to our normal routines with more awareness of how important it is to maintain good hygiene. Together, we will protect each other.

Now go wash your hands for 20 seconds....