



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

COVID-19 Recommendations for Pet Stores, Pet Distributors, and Pet Breeding Facilities

Updated June 30, 2020

[Print Page](#)

Summary of Recent Changes

Revisions were made on June 30, 2020 to reflect the following:

- Recommendations were added for establishing an animal health and disease management plan specific to the facility, monitoring animals in store daily for signs of illness, and separating sick animals.
- Enhanced precautions were added for introducing new animals or groups of animals to a facility. These replace the previous recommendation to consider a 2-week quarantine period.

What you need to know

- Worldwide, a small number of animals, including pets, have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, usually after having close contact with people with COVID-19.
- Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading SARS-CoV-2 to people is considered to be low.
- CDC does not recommend euthanasia of animals that test positive for SARS-CoV-2.
- Simple steps that pet stores, pet distribution facilities, and breeding facilities can take to reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 spreading in facilities include the following:
 - Encouraging workers to stay home if they are sick
 - Encouraging people within the facility to wear cloth face coverings and practice hand hygiene
 - Increasing the distance between workers, customers, or visitors, and animals within the facility
 - Regular cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.

CDC recommends that pet stores, pet distribution facilities, and pet breeding facilities act in accordance with state and local jurisdictional guidance when considering reopening or continuing operations.

Currently, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to people. CDC is aware of a small number of animals worldwide, including cats, dogs, mink, and lions, [reported](#) to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. These infections usually occur after close contact with people with known COVID-19. It is possible that other common small mammal pets (such as guinea pigs, rabbits, gerbils, chinchillas, sugar gliders, rats, mice, etc.) could get infected with SARS-CoV-2. Other animals sold in pet stores including, birds, reptiles, fish, and insects do not appear to be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by the virus that causes COVID-19 and the role animals may play in the spread of the virus among people.

For more information on animals that can be affected by SARS-CoV-2, see [COVID-19 and Animals](#).

What to do if an animal in a pet store, pet distribution facility, or pet breeding facility is suspected to have SARS-CoV-2 infection

Routine testing of companion animals for SARS-CoV-2 is currently not recommended. Animal testing for SARS-CoV-2 is available for mammalian species in certain situations; testing is not currently available for amphibians, reptiles, fish, or birds. Any facility that suspects a sick animal may be infected with SARS-CoV-2 should consult with their facility veterinarian. If the veterinarian suspects that the animal may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, they should contact their [State Public Health Veterinarian \(SPHV\)](#) or [State Animal Health Official \(SAHO\)](#) immediately. After other common causes of respiratory and gastrointestinal disease are ruled out, the SPHV and/or SAHO will engage national animal health and public health officials to decide whether SARS-CoV-2 testing is warranted, based on current guidance for [Evaluating and Testing Companion Animals for SARS-CoV-2](#).

If an animal is suspected to have SARS-CoV-2 infection, consult with a veterinarian to ensure that the animal is handled safely and received medical care if needed. The animal should be isolated and not have contact with people or other animals in the facility. Workers at [higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19](#) should avoid contact with the sick animal.

- Follow established [recommendations for use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) based on animal history. Workers should wear gloves, face mask, and goggles or face shield when working near sick animals.

Animal testing for SARS-CoV-2

Once the decision to test has been made, the SPHV and/or SAHO will initiate investigation, specimen collection, and [testing](#), in coordination with CDC and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). State animal health laboratories can conduct animal testing, but any positive samples need to be confirmed through additional testing by USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

If an animal tests positive

Confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infections in animals are posted by animal type, date, and state on USDA's [website](#) and must be reported by USDA to the [World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#). If an animal tests positive for SARS-CoV-2, a One Health investigation should be initiated that involves collaboration between the facility and state and federal partners including public health and animal health officials to address human health, animal health, and animal welfare. **CDC does not recommend euthanasia of animals that test positive for SARS-CoV-2.**

Additional [guidance for what to do if a companion animal tests positive](#) for SARS-CoV-2 is available.


How to protect people and animals in pet stores, pet distribution facilities, and pet breeding facilities


People and animals in pet stores, pet distribution facilities and pet breeding facilities should ensure they review and adhere to their established state and industry biosafety and biosecurity practices. Biosecurity is a series of management practices designed to reduce the risk of disease agents being introduced and spread in a facility. To be effective, biosecurity measures must be put in place specific to each disease and each site or area.

There are some simple steps that pet stores, pet distribution facilities, and breeding facilities can take to reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 spreading in facilities that house pets:

- **Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.** Encourage workers and supervisors not to come to work if they are experiencing [symptoms](#) consistent with COVID-19 and to [take steps to help prevent the spread of the virus](#). See CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) for more information.
- **Conduct daily health checks (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening) of workers** before they enter the facility. Use the "Should we be screening workers for COVID-19 symptoms" section of [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#) as a guide.
 - **Workers who appear to have [symptoms](#) consistent with COVID-19 upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should be sent home immediately and should contact their healthcare provider to discuss [COVID-19 testing](#).**
 - Surfaces in the workspace of the sick employee should be [cleaned and disinfected](#).
- **Seek emergency medical attention if someone is very sick or if they have any [emergency warning signs of COVID-19](#).** Call 911 or call ahead to a local emergency facility. Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.
- **Workers who are exposed to sick people or animals may need to self-monitor** for temperature or other symptoms for a period of 14 days post-incident. See [CDC Coronavirus Self-Checker](#) for additional information on symptoms of COVID-19 and making decisions about seeking medical care.
- **Limit the number of people in the facility, the time they can spend there, and increase distance between workers, customers/visitors, and animals within the facility.** The type and length of interactions that people have with animals should be limited within the facility. Workers and customers should maintain 6 feet (or about 2 meters) of distance between each other, and when possible between themselves and animals. Plan for [social distancing](#) and avoid crowding in the facility, including in animal and worker-only areas. Use signs, tape, or other visual clues to indicate where people should stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- **Install barriers if social distancing is difficult to maintain.** If worker-customer or customer-pet interactions occur inside the facility, customers should stand behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition that can serve to protect from respiratory droplets that may be produced during sneezing, coughing, or talking. These measures also can be used to protect animal displays and habitats from respiratory droplets from workers and customers.
- **Require all people within the facility to use [cloth face coverings](#),** especially where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Wearing a cloth face covering does NOT replace the need to practice social distancing.
 - If cloth face coverings are worn in these facilities, employers should provide readily available clean cloth face coverings (or disposable facemask options) for workers to use when the coverings become wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated.
- **Practice proper [hand hygiene](#).** Workers should wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60%

alcohol can be used. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be used rather than hand sanitizer. Customers interested in touching an animal should clean and disinfect hands before and after handling the animal.

- **Follow established guidance for cleaning, disinfection, and waste disposal.** Implement practical biosecurity practices in breeding and animal holding facilities, including having dedicated boot disinfecting stations between different animal housing areas. For disinfection, use products that meet [EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#) , diluted household bleach solutions prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and are appropriate for the surface. Always follow the directions on the label before use.
- **Seek veterinary medical consultation for the establishment of an animal health and disease management plan specific to the facility.**
- **Monitor all animals in store daily for signs of illness,** and immediately separate sick animals. Ensure that ill animals receive appropriate veterinary medical care in a timely manner.
- **Take enhanced precautions when introducing new animals or groups of animals to a facility.** Do not accept shipments of animals that appear sick. Observe new animals on intake for any health concerns before housing them in close proximity with other animals within the facility. Consider establishing quarantine procedures for new animals in consultation with a veterinarian, based on the animal species and disease-specific information.
 - When possible, avoid mixing animals from different shipments in one habitat.
 - Clean and disinfect habitats between different groups of animals and before new animals are added.
 - Establish and maintain a record system to allow tracing of animal movement.
 - Animals that are surrendered or returned to retail pet stores, breeding facilities, or any other establishments should be kept separate from other animals and observed for signs of illness, in consultation with a veterinarian.

Additional recommendations are described in the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's booklet [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) , as well as CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).


Precautions workers and/or visitors to the facility should take around animals

When interacting with healthy animals, people within the facility should use the same precautions as would be used when interacting with other people: maintain social distance (6 feet, or 2 meters) when possible, minimize how long they are in close contact, and [wear cloth face coverings](#) when feasible.

- Always immediately [wash hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after:
 - Having direct contact with animals or their food, supplies, or waste/feces.
 - Cleaning up after animals, including any body fluids or waste.
 - Leaving areas where animals are housed, even if you did not touch an animal.
 - Removing PPE or cloth face covering.
- **General guidance to prevent zoonotic disease transmission from bites, scratches, or abrasions from animals:** If a worker receives a bite, scratch or, abrasion from an animal, animal product, or an object contaminated by an animal, they should wash the exposed area of skin immediately with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, immediately alert their supervisor, and contact a healthcare provider. Animal bites and scratches can have other complications, such as bacterial infections, that may require medical attention.

Educate and train workers and supervisors about ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19

Employers should place [simple posters](#) in appropriate languages for their workers that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and proper hand hygiene practices. They should place these posters at the entrance to the workplace and in break areas, locker rooms, and other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.

OSHA provides [information](#)  about training on its COVID-19 webpage and CDC [guidance](#) provides additional details for recommendations in the subsection “**Educate workers about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home.**”

For more information on COVID-19 and Animals

See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) and [COVID-19 and Animals Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Page last reviewed: June 30, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)