

***What symptoms might a dog might exhibit if they had COVID-19? And what should we watch out for if the pet needs medical intervention?***

So the information from Hong Kong indicates there was only one positive dog tested for the virus and this dog was not sick. The Hong Kong officials also report that there was a second dog that tested negative. It was tested and tested negative. So to date there's only this one dog that has been identified as being positive. An international veterinary laboratory, a very good laboratory, has tested thousands of dogs and cats for COVID-19 virus as part of developing a test to use in animals if that test becomes necessary during this pandemic. During that testing of thousands of dogs and cats, the laboratory found no positive samples. So for right now, we think pets are not likely to become sick from the virus, nor do we think that they can transmit the virus to humans. So I can't answer the reader's question about clinical signs in animals with COVID-19, because we don't know anything about that right now.

***Is it safe to walk my dog? Should my dog wear a face mask when they go out?***

So first of all, the Surgeon General is not recommending face masks for those of us who are currently feeling well. Only sick people and healthcare workers should be wearing masks to protect them. And since we don't think dogs get this virus, there's not a reason for your dog to wear a face mask when it goes outside. So if you're healthy and not quarantined and the authorities allow you to go out and walk your dog, then you should do that. And there's also no reason not to pet your dog, but always keep in mind that both the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization guidelines recommend that you wash your hands before and after petting your animals or handling them in any way. Really this is all about hand-washing and soap and water are what the CDC thinks is the best.

***Does the virus stay on the pavement in streets for some time? And if so, should I wash my dogs paws and take my shoes off before entering my apartment? And the second question is, do we need to worry about our pets tracking the virus into the homes? Is wiping my pets enough?***

So from a strict hygiene point of view, cleaning your dog's paws after they've walked the streets of Manhattan and cleaning your shoes or taking your shoes off before you come inside, just makes good common hygiene sense. I do know that the virus has been identified on the shoes of healthcare workers taking care of people who are in the hospital with the COVID-19 virus, but that's completely different exposure than taking your dog for a walk where they're not Lots of people who are really sick walking the streets of New York. So the answer to this question is, we don't have an answer because we don't really know enough about the virus in our environment to know if walking on the streets is of any risk to bringing the virus home to family members.

***Is my dog a surface for the virus? If my dog on a walk interacts with a dog belonging to someone who has COVID-19, can that dog serve as a way to transmit the virus to another dog? If a person with the COVID-19 virus handles my dog and leaves droplets on the coat, can my dog be a vector for virus transmission?***

And this is a very difficult question to answer. Yesterday the New England Journal of Medicine reported a laboratory study. So this is a study done in a very controlled situation, not in a hospital room, not in someone's home, but in a laboratory. And the question the researchers asked was, how long does that virus hang around in the environment? And it hung around for three days on flat, hard surfaces like counter tops. When it landed on cardboard, it hung around for a day. But cardboard and counter tops are very different than our furry pets and the researchers didn't test anything furry in their study, so it's hard to know exactly what this means.

The American Veterinary Medical Association is reporting that the virus is very hard to transmit when it's on porous surfaces like pet fur, but there's still a chance that it could be transmitted, but we don't know is it a big chance or a small chance? We don't know. The greatest concern for all of us should be a pet in a household where the COVID-19 virus is infecting some of the human family members. And that's one of the reasons why the recommendation is that, if you're infected with COVID-19, you need to separate yourself from your pet and not interact with any human or animal family members because the risk of transmitting that virus even on the fur is quite unknown at this time. I know it doesn't exactly answer the question, but I think it's important to keep in mind that there's just so many things at this point that we don't know.

***Is it safe to take my pet to doggy daycare or the dog park?***

So that answer has two parts because the dog doesn't go to daycare on its own and it doesn't go to the park on its own. If it was all about dogs, then we think there's no risk at this point in time. No evidence that COVID-19 affects the dogs or cats for that matter, and dogs and cats don't seem to spread the virus. But if you and your friends use the dog park as an excuse to get too close together and congregate in large groups, then it defeats the whole purpose of the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control that we need to practice social distancing. And so if it's a drop and go or you're the only person in the dog park, then I would say it's okay to take your dog as long as the public health officials are allowing you to go out and on the streets. But if any of these activities result in groups of people congregating, then it's a terrible idea because we need to flatten the curve and prevent more people from getting infected with this virus.

***My dog's booster vaccines are due April. Should I take them now, wait until April, or wait indefinitely?***

So right now, because we are supposed to practice social distancing, going and sitting in the veterinarian's office seems like not practicing social distancing. Some local governments are telling people to shelter in place, are telling people that only essential services can be provided. And right now, I think most of us would agree that a booster vaccine in a healthy animal with very limited risk of disease is not likely to be an essential service. And therefore I think delaying your dog's vaccine till sometime when it's safer makes very, very, very good sense.

***Is surgery on your dog at this time dangerous?***

So if your veterinarian's office is down to a skeleton crew, and does not have enough staff members to safely perform a surgery, then I think they're going to tell you, you need to go to a different hospital where a surgery can be performed safely. But also, no one is doing elective surgeries right now. So no one is taking off little skin lumps, no one's cleaning teeth. Probably spays and neuters are getting delayed as well.

There are some surgical situations where it is a bonafide emergency and your pet cannot wait a couple of months. For example, if your dog is bloated, which is a distension of the stomach blocking off critical blood flow to the rest of the body because the stomach is so distended. And so the answer is that some emergency surgeries are going to need to be done at centers that are equipped to do them, but other elective surgeries should not be done because it decreases our ability to social distance. And so a true emergency needs to be taken care of but routine surgery doesn't need to be done at this time.

***I use newspaper in my cat's litter box. I get the papers from my neighbors who give it to me after they have read it. Since newspaper was handled by my neighbors, can the virus be spread that way if they're infected?***

So I already mentioned this article that was in yesterday's New England Journal of Medicine and it showed that the virus could persist on cardboard for about a day. So that makes me think that the newspapers of someone with COVID-19 might possibly be able to spread the virus. And since I think we're going to all need a lot of reading material over the next weeks, perhaps this is the time for this Facebook friend of the Animal Medical Centers to order their own newspaper subscription so that they don't have to worry that maybe that newspaper will bring the virus into their household.

# Covid-19 & Pets: Your Questions Answered

***What should we ask our dog walker to do since he enters a number of other apartments before coming to ours?***

and

***I own a dog grooming salon. What steps should I take other than disinfecting to keep our pet clients safe as well as our pet parents?***

So I think that this is really much more a question about the humans than it is about the animals. And so I'm going to quote the pop up that's on the Google homepage right now. And they say follow the five to prevent coronavirus and the five things are: **Hands**, wash them often; **Elbows**, cough into it; **Face**, don't touch it; **Feet**, stay more than three feet apart, and I'll add to the Facebook comment, stay more than six feet apart if someone is sick; if you **Feel** sick, stay home. All of these things apply to the grooming salon employees and to any dog walker out there and they apply to all of us. So I think these are the most important things that we can do. And again, if you forgot them, they're on the Google homepage.

***Is it okay for my golden retriever to sleep on the bed with me or should we confine her to the floor of the bedroom or another room? She's very attached to my husband and I.***

If you're well, the dog stays. If someone is sick, the CDC and the World Health Organization recommend separating the sick family member from all other family members, and sadly, that would include the dog. So let's hope this very attached golden retriever's family does not get the coronavirus because it will have to sleep alone in the kitchen if the family does.

***I have two indoor cats ages 11 and 12 and they only leave the apartment if necessary. Any advice about the virus for my cats? Like remove shoes and wash hands immediately after coming home for example?***

You should be doing that anyway. Everybody, the minute you come in, you've touched doorknobs and elevator buttons and all kinds of things between work and home. You need to come straight to that sink and wash your hands with soap and water and sing happy birthday. But back to the cat. There's no information right now to indicate that cats are susceptible to the virus or have been infected by the virus. So this is always back to what I've said before, hand washing with soap and water before and after interacting with your pets.

***Our dog Summer has stopped eating her own food. Our cat Evelyne is eating the dog food [that] the dog refuses. The dog is happy that we are working from home and the cat is unhappy because we are home and the dog and cat are fighting. What can we do?***

I think that this Facebook friend is expressing the anxiety that all of us are sharing right now. Our homes are going to feel very small when this pandemic ultimately passes. Cats are especially sensitive to needing their own space and we're all going to need to identify our own space no matter how small our apartments are. We don't have to worry about the decor right now because nobody should be coming over to your house. So save a couple of those boxes that you've had things delivered in and set up some new places for the cats to hide.

Order some Feliway on Amazon. Feliway is a pheromone. That's something that cats can smell but you can't smell. But it is a very comforting smell to cats. Spritz those boxes with the Feliway and give them a comfy, safe blanket in there so they have a good place to go so they can take a break from all the people that are home that they're not used to being home. You might also want to look into finding a way for your cats to climb. Cats like to be high up and they like to have a full view of the room. So if you can organize some perch for the cat on a windowsill or a high shelf, that'd be another good thing to make the cat feel a little safer.

The feeding problems that this family has experienced might improve if you fed the animals with feeding toys. Feeding toys are things that make the pet work for their meal. And if you don't have time to order one from the Internet or delivery is slow, you can also simply just do an Internet search for homemade feeding toys and you can find all kinds of great examples of fun things that you can make. And since we have nothing but time to do things like this, you'll give you or your children something to do is to make a home done feeding toy for your pet.

### ***Can lizards get the coronavirus? Can pet parrots?***

So I'm going to tell you that coronaviruses are complicated because it's not just coronavirus. There are alpha, beta, gamma, and delta coronaviruses. And then there are the species-specific coronaviruses, meaning those coronaviruses that currently only infect a particular animal. So dogs have a naturally occurring coronavirus of their own. It's not transmitted to cats. And cats have a coronavirus and they don't give it to dogs. There are coronaviruses of fowl: wild birds, ducks, chickens. But those viruses are in a different group of virus than the current COVID-19 virus. So we believe those viruses will stay within their species.

I think that's one of the things that's very unique about this virus causing COVID-19 and why it's gone so crazy, is that this virus started in animals and it adapted its ability to infect people.

*(continued)*

And so it's a brand new virus and none of us have immunity against the virus. And that's obviously very apparent if you look at the infection maps that you can find everywhere right now. So right now doesn't look like the virus affects dogs and cats and let's hope that this virus does not affect lizards and parrots. But as of right now, we don't have any information about the virus in those species.

***Will the Animal Medical Center be closed if the mayor orders shelter-in-place?***

We at AMC certainly hope we will be open. But right now, all New York State veterinarians are currently awaiting guidance from the governor as to whether or not veterinarians are considered essential businesses. The governor declared today that only essential businesses can be open, but he's offered no guidance as to what his definition of essential business is. And so unless we get a designation as an essential business, then we would have to close. So fingers crossed that the governor declares veterinarian's essential and then we will be able to stay open.

Our homepage of our website, which is [www.amcny.org](http://www.amcny.org), will list what precautions we're taking and if we're open and what kinds of patients we're able to manage during this pandemic. So check back to that website often.

***I am the only caretaker for my pets and there is no backup. What do I do to take care of my pets if I end up with COVID-19?***

So I'm going to tell you that I'm going to think positively about this pandemic and I'm going to believe that neighbors will help neighbors and that your pet will have good care if you get sick. If you get sick and there are no neighbors to take care of your pet, then you need to separate yourself from the pet, even if that means sending your pet to stay with a friend while you recover. This is a big problem for many people who live alone, and it's important to take good care of yourself. Wash your hands, and follow the five rules listed on the Google homepage.

I want to say thanks to everybody who sent these great questions and thank you to everyone who's watched this Facebook live session. I hope it's been helpful. I just want to remind you that this will be archived and available for replay in the next couple of days. You can check AMCs website, YouTube channel, Instagram for notifications about that, and please stay well, stay safe, and don't forget to wash your hands. Thank you very much and have a good evening.