

Toronto Humane Society

Management of COVID-19-exposed or infected animals

Approved by: Karen Ward	Effective date: March 18, 2020
Author: Linda Jacobson	Revision Date: May 19, 2020; June 4 added removal from home; August 18 shortened quarantine times (LJ); Jan 27 2021 – adjusted in-shelter quar times to match (LJ); adjusted quarantine requirements (LJ June 25, 2021)
Sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Animal Services’ Role in COVID-19 Support - University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine https://www.uwsheltermedicine.com/library/resources/animal-services-role-in-covid-19-support#temporarysheltering2. COVID-19 infection in pets: https://humanecanada.ca/our-work/covid19-for-shelters/3. Council of Chief Veterinary Officers’ Position Statement on SARS-CoV-2 testing of animals - https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/council-of-chief-vet-officers-p-s-testing-animals-sars-cov-24. Removing Pets from Homes of Residents that are or Suspected to be Infected With COVID-19, National Animal Control Association https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/8.Removing-Pets-from-Homes-of-Residents-that-are-or-Suspected-to-be-Infected-With-1COVID-19-2.pdf5. The reason cats get COVID and dogs don’t https://www.aaha.org/publications/newstat/articles/2020-08/the-reason-cats-get-covid-and-dogs-dont/?MvBriefArticleId=289666. New Feline SARS-CoV-2 Experimental Infection Study https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/2020/06/articles/animals/dogs/new-feline-sars-cov-2-experimental-infection-study/7. Worms and Germs review October 2020

Terminology

- SARS-CoV-2 – the virus
- COVID-19 – the disease

Definitions

- **Exposed animal:** Has been in close contact with a person known or strongly suspected to be ill with COVID-19
- **Infected animal:** Confirmed positive on a PCR test
- Note, as for other infectious diseases, “**exposed to exposed**” [people or animals] does not require special precautions

Pets and COVID-19: Basics

1. Some types of pets can get COVID-19 infection from people but only a handful of natural cases have been reported – this is still true a year after this protocol was written.
2. Susceptibility to COVID-19 for animals that are typically housed at THS:
 - a. Ferrets are most susceptible, followed by cats. Ferrets were able to transmit infection to other ferrets in a laboratory setting and the same was found for cats.

- b. Clinical signs tend to be transient and are often mild; may be absent. Typically fever, lethargy, upper respiratory signs, diarrhea.
 - c. Young animals are more susceptible than older ones and may show more severe clinical illness such as clinical pneumonia. Important to be aware of this for kittens.
 - d. Dogs are less susceptible. They are unlikely to get infected, did not show clinical signs and did not spread infection to other dogs in a laboratory setting. No dog-human transmission has been reported.
 - e. Rats and mice were not susceptible but hamsters could be experimentally infected.
3. Pet-to-human transmission is very unlikely.

Foster parents infected with or exposed to COVID-19

- 1. This does not require automatic return to shelter.
- 2. **The animal should remain in the foster home if they can be cared for there.**
- 3. If the foster parent or someone in the household is isolated or quarantined for COVID-19:
 - a. Pets are people too, when it comes to SARS-CoV-2.
 - b. The affected person/people should minimize contact with the foster animal and just provide necessary care during the isolation period.
 - c. If an animal has been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, keep it inside to the extent possible and away from others.
 - d. Follow Public Health guidelines for when isolation or quarantine is over.

Management of non-clinical COVID-exposed animals housed in the shelter

- 1. Wear mask, reusable gown and gloves until able to assess for respiratory signs.
 - a. Add face shield if animal has respiratory signs
 - b. No special precautions with gowns after removal; normal laundering.
 - c. Bathing and decontamination are NOT needed
- 2. After determined to be non-clinical:
 - a. Standard cleaning and disinfection as for any shelter animal
 - b. Manage the animal as though it is part of a small transfer
 - c. Level 2 PPE
 - d. Quarantine sign
 - e. No direct contact with other dogs when out on walks
 - f. Gen pop and no precautions after 7 days (dogs) or 10 days (cats).
 - g. Adopt or foster with disclosure when otherwise ready for adoption/foster

Management of COVID-exposed animals housed briefly in the shelter

- 1. For example, urgent visits or procedures for foster or owned animals
- 2. Manage as above
 - a. However, the animal can be housed in other parts of the shelter at DVM discretion, if medical needs require (e.g. critically ill)
 - b. Quarantine within the room where needed e.g. dog or cat ward

COVID-exposed animals with clinical signs

- 1. Clinical signs are respiratory signs and/or diarrhea. These may be seen in many shelter animals, the vast majority of which will not have COVID-19. Consider:
 - a. History and timing of exposure
 - b. Age and species of animal
 - c. A likely non-COVID-19 explanation for the clinical signs

- d. What would be the purpose of the test and how would the results change management and outcomes?
2. If COVID-19 infection is suspected and testing is being considered, contact the Chief Veterinary Officer immediately regarding next steps.
 - a. Animal testing is not recommended by the Canadian Council of Chief Veterinary Officers or any other public health agencies, other than under exceptional circumstances (e.g. suspected shelter outbreak).
 - b. Details for local veterinary authorities are listed in the CCVO Position Statement, see link in Sources.

Removal of animals from homes of residents with known or suspected COVID-19

(Most of this material is directly from the NACA statement, see sources above; refer to NACA statement if more information is needed).

1. **If infected or recently exposed people are present in the home:**
 - a. A THS staff member can pick up the animal if curbside transfer is possible.
 - b. If a staff member is required to enter the home, this falls outside the scope of what THS is equipped to deal with at present. Contact Toronto Animal Services to remove the animal; arrangements could be made for an immediate transfer of the animal to THS if needed.
2. **If no people are in the home:** (e.g. owner is in the hospital)
 - a. If possible, arrange curbside transfer through a friend or neighbour.
 - b. If it is necessary to enter the home:
 - i. Wear a face mask, disposable gloves and gown when inside the home
 1. **Important:** If directly handling the animal within 14 days of exposure to COVID-19, wear a surgical mask and eye protection (goggles or a face shield), as well as gloves or gown. This is because of the very small risk that the animal could be shedding the virus.
 - ii. Once the animal has been secured into the vehicle, PPE can be removed. Remove PPE before entering the vehicle. Have an empty garbage bag for this purpose. Remove and dispose of all PPE except face protection.