**Can pets contract, carry and spread the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?**



The new Coronavirus (COVID-19) has managed to spread like a viral wildfire to over 162 countries and continues to do so at a ruthless pace – in some areas more aggressively than others. The vicious virus has claimed thousands of lives and has left a global population in a state of panic. Hand sanitizers, toilet paper and other hygiene necessities have flown off the shelves as a result of the panic which drives many to prepare for self-quarantine. It seems as if the world as we knew it has been turned upside down! Suddenly, we’re all leaning over to the OCD hygiene habits, feeling the need to wash our hands much more than before – and for more than 20 seconds while singing the Happy Birthday song not only once, but twice!

Humans are at high risk of being infected with COVID-19, but what about our precious pets? Can Coco contract and spread COVID-19, or is Furball ‘purr-fectly’ safe? Allow us to clear the air on this concern…

The pet dog of a Coronavirus patient in Hong Kong has been found to have a low level of the virus after being repeatedly tested, but there is no evidence yet that pets can spread the virus, states the Hong Kong Government. The World Health Organization also confirmed that there is [no evidence](https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses?mod=article_inline)that pets such as cats and dogs have been fatally infected or could spread the COVID-19 virus.

Although there is no confirmed evidence to this effect, the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) – the professional body that represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide – advises that pet owners wash their hands after interacting with their pets and continue to practise proper hygiene practises with their four-legged friends.

Take note: Dogs can get Canine Coronavirus, which is different from COVID-19. Humans, however, can’t contract Canine-specific Coronavirus. **Canine Coronavirus** is a highly contagious intestinal infection and symptoms include:

* Vomiting
* Diarrhoea
* Dehydration
* Fatigue
* Loss of appetite

If your dog experiences the above symptoms, go to your nearest vet ASAP!

**Precautionary tips to keep pets healthy:**



1. Ensure that your pets stick to a high-quality diet to strengthen their immune systems.
2. Make sure that your pet’s vaccinations are up to date.
3. Don’t allow your pets to come into close contact with other people’s pets.
4. Brush your dog and kitty’s pearly whites to improve oral hygiene. (Don’t use human toothpaste, rather [buy toothpaste for pets.)](https://www.takealot.com/pet-dent-toothpaste-for-dogs-cats-60g/PLID46863481?gclid=Cj0KCQjw6sHzBRCbARIsAF8FMpVMklH43v2g5wx6swwqBvyipw82HwyBJEMftmrDpHu62ipQRuk3WqgaAh3zEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds)
5. Give your pet a bath at least every two weeks or so to keep their coats shiny and clean. (If kitty’s not a fan of soap and water, [buy dry shampoo for pets](https://www.takealot.com/spencers-waterless-skin-healing-and-anti-insect-powder-shampoo/PLID52344628)).
6. Wash your fur child’s bed and blanky regularly to avoid the spread of germs. (Bleach it, if you must).
7. Make sure that your furry companions have [pet insurance](https://www.dotsure.co.za/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw6sHzBRCbARIsAF8FMpVFclO8C-vU3MZ7Lconvmdetq4jm0gCt92hdS09HrfcQAc0KuBhPLgaAnJ7EALw_wcB) should they fall ill (or get injured) necessitating an (expensive) trip to the vet.

According to The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), being prepared is key. Make sure you have an emergency kit consisting of at least two weeks’ worth of your pet food and any needed medications.

Remember, although there is no evidence that pets can contract or spread the COVID-19 virus, it’s best to be cautious and stick to good hygiene habits when socialising with your beloved pet. If you notice that your pet is sneezing, coughing or having trouble breathing, please consult a qualified vet immediately. Don’t take a sniff and lazy day too lightly.

As for humans, the World Health Organization recommends that we wash our hands regularly, cover our mouths and noses when in close proximity, amongst other people, and rather avoid such contact where possible for the time being. The Organization also urges members of the public to get tested for COVID-19 if flu-like symptoms are experienced.

Stay safe and maintain proper hygiene – remember that good health is your most precious asset!

**Sources**

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