Interim Guidance on Shelter Care of Animals Exposed to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) last updated 3-15-20

This interim guidance is shared with the knowledge that ongoing research will likely uncover new information necessitating frequent updates. Much is unknown in this rapidly evolving situation and authoritative international expert guidance is still pending.

Every effort should be made to keep pets with their families. The CDC released guidelines for COVID-19 patients with pets recovering at home. However, some exposed pets will need to be housed in shelters, such as when the owner is hospitalized or unable to provide basic care. See guidance for animal control functions and officer safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The virus is spread primarily from infected people through small droplets from the respiratory tract that can remain viable in the environment for several days. There is a low (but present) risk of pet infection, but there is no evidence at this time that pets from contaminated households can transmit the virus. Out of an abundance of caution, it is advisable to decontaminate their coats at the time of shelter intake. Fortunately, coronaviruses are easily inactivated by detergents and common shelter disinfectants, such as quaternary ammonium compounds, bleach, Trifectant, Virkon, Wysiwash, and AHP.

1. Three options for decontaminating pets include:

   **Option 1 – Bathing (recommended):** Bathing with a shampoo or detergent such as Dawn dishwashing soap will mechanically remove and inactivate viral particles (similar to handwashing). Pets decontaminated on intake can be housed in a low-traffic area where other animals are housed provided there are no opportunities for direct contact between animals.

   **Option 2 – Application of accelerated hydrogen peroxide:** When bathing is not an option, the hair coat can be decontaminated by soaking in a 1:128 dilution of AHP applied with a wash cloth, spray, or dip. This is likely to be less effective in complete decontamination than bathing, so post-treatment segregation for 5 days is advisable.

   **Option 3 – Segregation:** When bathing or soaking is not possible, isolate in double-sided housing so feeding and cleaning can be completed without handling the pet for 5 days, after which time the viral particles are expected to become naturally inactivated.

2. **Wear PPE** when entering a contaminated environment (such as an infected person's home), when handling an exposed animal as for intake processing, or bathing. CDC guidance for EMTs provide practical examples of PPE.

3. **Post signage** on the kennel identifying the exposure and “do not touch.”

4. **If possible, restrict contact for 5 days** via using a low-traffic area with double-sided housing so feeding and cleaning can be completed without handling the animal.

5. **Restrict access** by the public and nonessential personnel.

6. **Immediately disinfect surfaces** in common use areas where exposed animals have contacted (floors, gurneys, animal control vehicles, tables, handling equipment, etc).