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BREAKING NEWS / Here are the COVID vaccination sites in Ohio

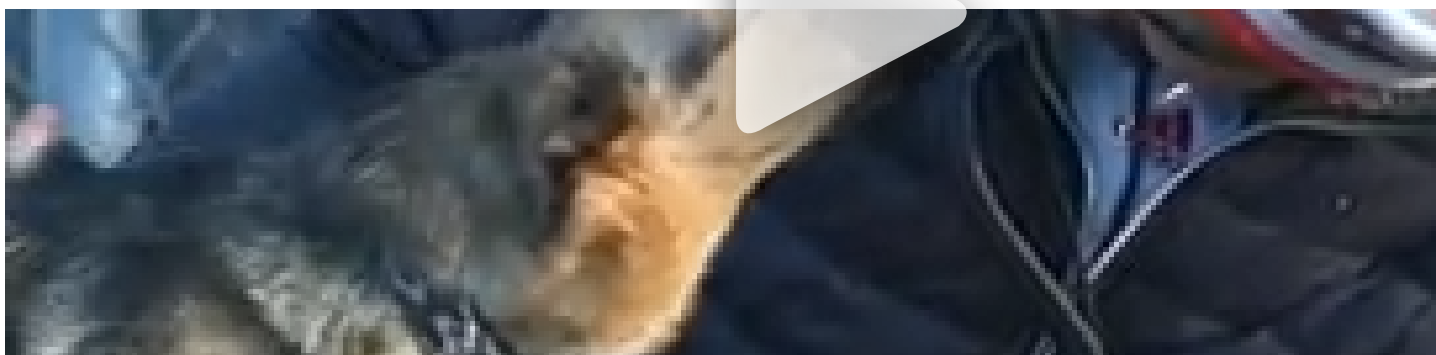
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CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus: What you can do to help prepare your pets

What you can do to help prepare your pets as coronavirus concerns grow

2 minutes left



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CLEVELAND (WJW/CNN) – Health experts say they are not concerned about the transmission of the coronavirus (COVID-19) to or from animals, however, there are steps pet owners can take to prepare for the pets' needs in case they fall ill.

The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) reports that multiple domestic and international health organizations have indicated that pets are not at risk for contracting or spreading the novel coronavirus.

However, this has citizens asking why one dog in Hong Kong test positive for coronavirus last week. Here's what happened:

Last Friday, Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) [said](#) that samples from the dog's nasal and oral cavities had tested "weak positive" for the novel coronavirus. It was believed to be the first time that a dog anywhere in the world tested positive for the virus.

The dog – which had no symptoms – was put into quarantine and will be repeatedly tested until the result comes back negative, according to the statement. The department "strongly advises" that pets of people infected with coronavirus are quarantined for 14 days.

Despite this, the AFCD and the World Health Organization both agree [there is no evidence](#) that pets such as cats or dogs can be infected with the coronavirus. That's because while dogs can test positive for the virus, it doesn't necessarily mean they have been infected.

Health officials know that coronaviruses can live on [surfaces and objects](#), although researchers don't know exactly how long this virus can linger for.

In the same way, coronavirus could be present on the surface of a dog or cat, even if the dog or cat hasn't actually contracted the virus. The AFCD is testing to

“Present evidence suggests that dogs are no more of a risk of spreading (coronavirus) than inanimate objects such as door handles,” wrote Sheila McClelland, the founder of Hong Kong-based Lifelong Animal Protection Charity (LAP), in a letter to the Hong Kong authorities, which she shared with CNN.

McClelland said there had been no confirmed cases of cats or dogs contracting the disease anywhere in the world, and that there are no published studies showing that the coronavirus test is accurate in dogs.

Experts believe that like the SARS outbreak in 2003, COVID-19 likely originated in bats.

Veterinarians argue that dogs and cats do get coronaviruses – but they are not at all the same as the virus associated with this current outbreak. Those strains are a completely different type and don’t cause respiratory problems.

[According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the main way the disease is spreading is from person-to-person, either from when people are close together or from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs and sneezes.

Jane Gray, Hong Kong SPCA’s chief veterinary surgeon says there is still value in quarantining pets from a scientific perspective because it allows scientists to observe how an animal relates to a disease we still know relatively little about.

“Whilst it seems a bit scary, it’s purely a precautionary measure, and it’s certainly nothing for pet owners, in general, to be concerned about,” said Gray.

Some pet owners in mainland China have been fitting their dogs with tiny face masks, but Gray said there is no benefit to that – in fact, it’s probably fairly distressing for the pet and could cause them to panic.

Instead, pet owners should stick to the basics: good hygiene.

particularly concerned, they can wipe their dog's paws with antiseptic wipes after they have had a walk outside – but they should take care not to overdo it, as wiping too much can dry out a dog's paws.

“I am certainly not in any concern of my dog or cats. I'm far more concerned about myself catching it from a human being that has the disease,” said Gray, who is a pet owner herself.



To veterinarians and animals rights experts, there is a bigger issue than the potential spread of coronavirus to pets: the spread of fear.

After the announcement that the Hong Kong dog tested positive last week, the Lifelong Animal Protection Charity (LAP) – a group which helps rehome animals in Hong Kong – wrote to the government, saying its announcement caused “a tremendous amount of panic.”

McClelland, the founder of LAP, said she had been contacted by “countless people” worried for their pets, with many anxious that their dog or cat would be forcibly set to quarantine.

“In a state of panic, people could abandon or kill their pets,” she said. “Other people could stigmatize people who have dogs. Dog owners could face unreasonable problems when simply walking their pets outdoors, or neighbors could create trouble for no reason.”

In Wuhan, the Chinese city at the center of the epidemic and which has been under [lockdown for over a month](#), pets have been trapped in apartments alone while their owners are stuck outside the city. Volunteers from Wuhan Small Animal Protection Association say they have rescued [hundreds of pets](#) left in apartments.

since the outbreak and that pets were being unfairly targeted.

So far, Gray and McClelland haven't seen any sign of an increase in pet abuse or abandonment in Hong Kong. Instead, they've both seen an increase in people looking into steps to export their pets overseas – suggesting owners are looking to leave the city.

Meanwhile, in Northeast Ohio, the [Cleveland Animal Protective League \(APL\)](#) is urging pet owners to prepare for their pets' needs in the event that they are diagnosed with the virus and cannot care for them for a period of time.

“We don't want people to panic, now's the time to stay calm,” said Sharon Harvey, President & CEO of the Cleveland Animal Protective League, “This is emergency preparedness, we need to have back up plans for our pets so they get the care they need too, because they're part of the family.”

The APL is recommending that owners do the following:

- Identify a friend, family member, or pet sitter to take care of your pet(s) in the event you cannot
- Have crates, food, and extra supplies on hand in case you need to move pets quickly
- Research boarding facilities and make sure your pets' vaccinations are up to date in the event boarding becomes necessary
- Prepare a list of the medications your pet takes including dosages and administration instructions. Make sure you have enough medication on hand for at least a two-week period of time, if not more.
- Make sure your pets are wearing an identification tag or are microchipped. In Ohio, the law requires that dogs are licensed in your county.

“The best thing pet parents can do is not panic and stay healthy for your pets by practicing good preventive measures, such as hand washing and avoiding close contact with other people,” Cleveland APL President & CEO Sharon Harvey said in a press release. “Every single day of the year it is crucial that you have a back-up

Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have suggested the following precautions in the event you are diagnosed with the virus:

- Wash your hands before touching or feeding your pet
- Do not sneeze or cough on your pet
- Avoid snuggling or kissing your pet
- Do not allow your pet to come in contact with other people or animals.

Again, CDC officials reiterate these precautions are only for those who are diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus.

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