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## **NOVEL CORONA VIRUS COVID-19 AND YOUR PETS**

*Dr. Kathryn Junkins Sarpong*

Many rumors and questions exist about the new coronavirus (COVID-19), and some of those concerns extend to our furry family members. You may be wondering: Can you give this virus to your pet? Can you get it from your pet? Can your pet be a carrier?

The simple answer is that your dog and cat are not at any significant risk of contracting the new corona (COVID-19) virus. Other coronaviruses are seen regularly in pets, but these are DIFFERENT from the pandemic we are currently fighting. So, do not believe the Internet rumors about your dog getting the coronavirus and think this is the same disease. There may be sporadic reports of the virus in some cat species. Still, these have not demonstrated to be a source of human infections. The most common coronaviruses in cats have no connection to COVID-19. COVID-19 is suspected to be originally an animal virus – likely bats – but made the jump to humans before becoming a pandemic.

People infect other people with COVID-19. Your dog and cat are not a proven risk for you contracting the virus. Your pet's most likely way to be an infectious threat to you is their fur coat acting as a fomite. Fomite is a medical term for a surface that can transmit the virus. Like a dirty door handle, your pet's fur could be a reservoir for virus particles if they were in contact with an infected person. So, while we are practicing social distancing, your pet should also not be in unnecessary contact with people outside the family. If your pet does have contact with a sick person, a cleansing wipe with VERY dilute bleach (1/2 tsp household bleach in 1 gal water) of their fur can help. (A single Clorox® wipe can do the trick as well). Avoid the eyes, ears, and mouth areas. I am recommending against pet playdates at this time, and cats should be kept indoors.

Your pet's medical needs can be addressed during this time. Call your family veterinarian for the safety modifications required for a visit. We are offering curbside service and lots of telemedicine appointments at our clinic. We can still perform surgeries and hospitalize pets needing advanced procedures.

When you have questions or concerns about COVID-19 and your pets, feel free to reach out to your family veterinarian for information. 

