

PET CARE GUIDE IF YOU HAVE

COVID-19

The best thing we can do with pets of people with COVID-19 is to keep them in the home with their family. However, you need to be prepared in case you test positive to COVID-19 or if you have to be admitted to the hospital and live alone.

What to do with my animals if I am in quarantine due to COVID-19?

Unfortunately, if you have tested positive to COVID-19, you are unable to take your dog for a walk or exercise them outside your property. This is particularly important if you live in high-density housing such as large apartment complexes with shared communal areas such as corridors, lifts, stairwells, and foyers. However, you can still keep your companion animals mentally stimulated by:



TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR ANIMALS MENTALLY & PHYSICALLY ACTIVE.

- Providing them several small meals rather than one or two larger meals.
- Playing fetch games inside with them, this will also provide them with a form of exercise.
- Teach them a new obedience command or trick.

To prevent the possible spread of COVID-19 to the community, it's not recommended to ask friends, family or neighbours to walk your dog while you're positive for COVID-19. If you have a private yard, you can walk your dog in this area. If you do not have a private yard, you might need to train your dog to eliminate indoors. This may prove to be challenging, as once a dog is house trained, he is usually very reluctant to eliminate indoors.

If attempting to train your dog to eliminate indoors or on a balcony, use potty pads, turf, artificial grass trays, or another surface for elimination. Train your dog to eliminate on that surface just as you did when you house trained them as a puppy by using treats and positive reinforcement. It may help to put your dog's leash on before walking him to this new elimination area, to reinforce the idea that this is his new elimination area.

This will prevent repeated exposure to common areas and/or contact with someone coming to take your dog out to the toilet multiple times a day and, therefore, the potential for virus spread.

If you cannot take care of your companion animals' needs while you are in home quarantine - for example, you live in an apartment with no private outdoor access or your home does not have a private courtyard or garden) - then you will need to arrange for someone to help with the animal's care.



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What do I do if my companion animal becomes unwell?

It is important to remember not to leave your home to take them to the vet. By doing this, you could put your vet, their nurses and other people at risk of infection. It's always a good idea to ring your vet first, let them know you have COVID-19 and discuss the best way to work with you to ensure your companion animal will receive the care they need, while they can keep themselves and their staff safe. There may be an option for the vet to provide telehealth services for your companion animal.

What to do with my pet if I test positive and have to go to the hospital?

You have a duty of care to ensure your companion animal receives adequate food, water, care and treatment. If you are hospitalised or must quarantine in accommodation that is not your usual residence, and there is no one in the household to care for your pets, other arrangements need to be made for the care of your pets. This may include arranging a boarding kennel or cattery, or a second option could be to send them to the home of friends, family or a neighbour for the duration of your quarantine period if it is possible to do so in a COVID-safe way.

You should have an emergency plan in place for the care of your pet, just in case you become unwell or are hospitalised. The plan may include:

- Having an emergency kit ready with leads, collars, dry food or medicines.
- Ensure your emergency kit has been sanitised and placed outside for collection.
- Make sure you have all emergency contacts written down for the carer of your companion animal.
- Tell someone else what your emergency plan is so they can make arrangements for you if needed.

Develop a plan for your animals

Having a plan in place to ensure the welfare of your animals will provide you with peace of mind. To ensure the welfare of animals during the COVID-19 pandemic, you should develop a plan for how you will meet your animals' needs in the event that you or other people who care for your animals become sick, or restrictions make it difficult to maintain existing arrangements to support your animals.

Having a plan will help you look after yourself and your animals during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will need to review and update your plan as the situation changes. The plan should cover:

- Basic feed and care arrangements for your animals.
- How to secure enough food to get you through a possible self-isolation period.
- Who will look after your animals if you become sick and can no longer care for them.
- Contact details for your local veterinarian and emergency veterinary clinic.
- How to secure any medications that are required for your animals.

Work with your veterinarian if your animals require critical ongoing or long term medication. Be mindful that veterinary clinics may also be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and operate at a different level of service to normal.

Can animals become infected?

Human outbreaks are being driven by person to person spread. It is important to note that the current spread of the COVID-19 virus is due to transmission between people and there is currently no evidence of transmission of the virus from animals – either companion or farm animals – to people. Furthermore, there have been no reports of companion animals, farm animals or wildlife being infected with the COVID-19 virus in Australia.

The World Organisation for Animal Health has confirmed that there continues to be no evidence that companion animals have spread the disease, or play a significant role in this human disease. Visit <https://www.ave.gov.au/coronavirus/animals> for more information about COVID-19 and animals.