



## SF SPCA Acceptance & Handling of Returned Animals Exposed to COVID-19 in Foster or Adoptive Homes

The virus that causes COVID-19 is SARS-CoV-2. While two dogs (in Hong Kong) and one cat (in Belgium) were reported to have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, infectious disease experts and multiple international and domestic human and animal health organizations agree there is no evidence at this point that pets spread COVID-19 to other animals, including people. Therefore, when animals are returned to the SF SPCA shelter after living in a foster or adoptive home with a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, the greatest risk of exposure to shelter staff will be in interacting with such person(s).

Animals exposed to persons infected with COVID-19 should be separated from the general animal population during the animal's stay in the shelter due to the unknown risks associated with this rapidly evolving emerging infectious disease. While there is no reason at this time to think that companion animals in the United States might be a source of SARS-CoV-2 infection, it is prudent to keep companion animals that came from households where a person was infected with COVID-19 separated from the general shelter population out of an abundance of caution to protect both human and animal health.

- 1.** If a member of the foster or adoptive home becomes infected with COVID-19, we recommend that the animal stay in the home, but that someone else in the home provide hands-on care for the animal and that the infected person avoid any interaction with the animal.
- 2.** In a foster home in which no one other than a person with COVID-19 can care for the animal, we still recommend that the animal stay in the foster home, as long as the foster parent is well enough to provide necessary care. Foster parents with COVID-19 should limit their interaction with the animal. Specifically, while a person infected with COVID-19 is symptomatic, they should maintain separation from household animals as they would with other household members and avoid direct contact with pets including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, sleeping in the same location, and sharing food.
- 3.** If an animal from a home with a COVID-19 infected person must be returned to the SF SPCA shelter, a different person should transport the animal to the shelter whenever possible. If that is not possible, all appropriate precautions should be taken to prevent exposure from the infected person, as described below.
  - a.** Determine a drop-off time with foster parents and Foster Team and/or Intake staff members.
  - b.** Foster parents will be directed to leave all supplies at home—only return the dog on a leash or cat in a carrier.
  - c.** Animals will be taken to the chemical courtyard in the adoptions parking lot. Normally, this lot is closed to the public during the shelter in place directive. Staff members will meet the foster parent/adopter at that location. Staff members will be equipped with full PPE (gowns, gloves, N95 masks, eye protection) and must remain at least six (6) feet away from the foster parent/adopter at all times.
  - d.** Using the grey remote, the staff member will open the main gate and the gate to the chemical courtyard. The foster parent/adopter will be instructed to drive into the chemical yard and unload the dog (on leash) or cat (in carrier). The foster parent or adopter will be asked to clip the dog's leash to the carabiner near the Shelter Annex door and leave.
  - e.** Once the foster parent/adopter leaves the chemical courtyard, staff members will close the chemical courtyard gate and the animal will be transported into the building to the specified location.

- f.** The leash will be discarded immediately after use.
  - g.** The carrier should be cleaned and disinfected using usual procedures, then kept in a labeled, designated area (along wall closest to dumpsters) without being used for 72 hours. After 72 hours, it should be disinfected again and returned to normal use.
- 4.** Staff handling the animal should wear gloves and long-sleeved protective clothing (e.g. gowns, coveralls, or dedicated scrub pants w/ long sleeved smocks or lab coats).
- a.** Hands should be washed with soap and water after gloves are removed and discarded.
  - b.** If the animal has signs of an unexplained illness at the time of return, management should be consulted to determine if consultation with public health authorities regarding testing and further precautions is warranted.
- 5.** There is no need to bathe an animal because of COVID-19 concerns. At this time, there is no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 can spread to people from the skin or fur of animals.
- 6.** Animals that have been exposed to COVID-19 should be segregated from the general shelter population and remain Unavailable Medical (UAM) for 14 days after the last known exposure to COVID-19.
- a.** Dogs should be walked outside for elimination and exercise, but direct contact with other animals should be avoided. Feces should be collected and disposed of immediately.
  - b.** If an animal exposed to COVID-19 develops an unexplained illness after their return, management should be consulted to determine if consultation with public health authorities regarding testing and further precautions is warranted.