# This sample protocol was developed by UW Shelter Medicine Program and UC-Davis Koret Shelter Medicine based on “*Interim recommendations for intake of companion animals from households where humans with COVID-19 are present” which were written* in collaboration with the American Veterinary Medical Association, University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program, The Association of Shelter Veterinarians, University of California-Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida Maddie’s Shelter Medicine Program, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 One Health Team.

# Please feel free to add to this sample protocol for use in your own shelter.

**Collection of potentially exposed animals**

Animal service agents or officers being requested to assist with collection of one or more companion animals from the home of a person with known or suspected COVID-19, agencies should work guidance provided by their public health department including the state public health veterinarian or designated health official to minimize the risk to staff. Also see [NACA statement on safety for Animal Control Officers](https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NACA-Statement-on-Removing-Pets-from-Homes-of-Residents-that-are-or-Suspected-to-be-Infected-With-COVID-19.pdf) .

1. Whenever possible, avoid entry into the home where a person with COVID-19 lived in order to prevent person-to-person transmission; additionally, collect companion animals minimizing contact with people living in the home. This includes remaining a minimum of 6 feet away from other people and limiting contact with the home environment.
2. Wash hands carefully with soap and water following animal collection, even if gloves were utilized. Washing hands with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol before and after handling a companion animal should be done (See PPE section for additional information about hand washing.).
3. If collection of the animal involves interacting with people from COVID-19 infected households or being exposed to home environments that might be contaminated with the virus, utilize PPE or re-usable personal protective equipment (PPE) if single use PPE is not available (described below) as instructed by Public Health officials and after having been trained in the proper use of such equipment. (Also see PPE information below in Housing and Daily care section.)
4. For details on potential precautions, refer to AVMA Considerations for Mobile and House Call Veterinarians during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Intake Exams**

1. Wear gloves and gowns or coveralls while doing intake exams and treatments in order to reduce contagious disease risks.
   1. Launder re-usable gowns or coveralls before reuse (see section on PPE below).
   2. Wash hands with soap and water after gloves are removed and discarded.
2. Routinely clean and sanitize animal intake areas as well as materials in animal areas such as food and water bowls and bedding.
3. Do not bathe animals or use disinfectant topically on intake because of COVID 19 concerns. There is no need to bathe an animal because of COVID-19 concerns; at this time, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread to people from the skin or fur of pets.
   1. Disinfectants licensed by the EPA must be used in accordance with their label directions. Many disinfectants have the potential to cause significant harm if direct contact with human or animal skin occurs. It is inappropriate (and potentially illegal if not labeled accordingly) to apply liquid disinfectants directly onto animals.
4. Refer to the [Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf) by NASPHV for additional details on standard protocols for biosafety.

**Housing and in-shelter daily care**

1. Develop and communicate an animal housing plan in the shelter for companion animals that were in contact with a person with known or suspected COVID-19 infection or a known high-risk environment. Until more information is known, it is recommended that these animals be housed in an area separate from the rest of the shelter population, preferably in double-sided housing that is spot cleaned as needed when soiled. (See below for information on cleaning and disinfection).
2. Keep animals that were in contact with COVID-19 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 evidence at this time that any animals, including companion animals, in the United States, might be a source of infection for humans, 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.

In this shelter, in the area of the facility listed below should be used for potentially exposed companion animals:

*Dogs \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Cats\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Ferrets\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*(insert instructions for location above)*

1. When possible, dedicate separate staff for each group of animals or enhance hygiene precautions for staff that need to transfer between groups.
2. Address human health, animal health, and animal welfare needs when making plans for and implementing daily care of companion animals from households where humans with COVID-19 were present.
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
   1. Current shortages in commercially available PPE are causing a crisis due to the overwhelming need in the human healthcare field. See updates from [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html), FDA ([mask, gown](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/letters-health-care-providers/surgical-mask-and-gown-conservation-strategies-letter-healthcare-providers?utm_campaign=3-12-2020%20-%20Surgical%20Mask&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua), and [glove](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/letters-health-care-providers/medical-glove-conservation-strategies-letter-health-care-providers?utm_campaign=3-20-2020-Gloves&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua)), and [AVMA](https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/guidelines-ppe-covid-19-pandemic-demand-exceeds).
   2. Use routine basic PPE to prevent transmission of contagious pathogens, per usual shelter protocols.
   3. Use protective clothing, such as gowns or coveralls, that can be laundered, and dedicated footwear as an alternative to preserve disposable PPE. The use of gloves is recommended.
   4. Clean hands often. Washing hands with soap and water before and after handling a companion animal should be done.
   5. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
   6. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
   7. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   8. Hand washing should also be done right after removing gloves.
4. Walk dogs outside for elimination and exercise but avoid direct contact with other companion animals as a best practice to protect animal health.
   1. Collect feces using gloved hands or a bag and disposed of immediately. See hand washing information above.
   2. Ideally, walk dogs with possible COVID19 exposure in an area that can be readily sanitized and is separate from the general animal population.
5. Routinely clean and disinfect animal areas. Cleaning visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses. Coronaviruses are readily inactivated by disinfectants typically used in animal shelters, including accelerated hydrogen peroxide at concentrations used for other more common shelter pathogens (e.g. 1:64 (2 oz/gallon) for 5 minutes for coronaviruses, 1:32 (4 oz/ gallon) for 10 min. for parvoviruses). **Normal cleaning and disinfection protocols for both animal housing and common areas used in shelters are sufficient.**
   1. Disinfectants licensed by the EPA must be used in accordance with their label directions. Many disinfectants have the potential to cause significant harm if direct contact with human or animal skin occurs. It is inappropriate (and potentially illegal if not labeled accordingly) to apply liquid disinfectants directly onto animals.
6. Increase sanitation of surfaces frequently touched by people (e.g. light switches and door knobs) to reduce exposure to/from humans.

**Release from the shelter**

1. Promptly reunite sheltered companion animals with their owners.
2. Hold animals that need to be adopted or sent to a foster home for 14 days out of an abundance of caution.

**Illness and testing**

1. If a companion animal that has had close contact with a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 develops an unexplained illness during their shelter stay, animal shelter staff should work with appropriate public health or animal health authorities to determine whether testing for COVID-19 (see #8) and further precautions are warranted. Existing biosecurity and [infection prevention control](http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf) protocols should be adhered to in this event.
2. Neither the CDC, USDA, nor AVMA recommends that companion animals be routinely tested for COVID-19 at this time. Companion animals presenting with illness or injury should receive veterinary care. Where appropriate, testing for infectious diseases that commonly cause companion animal illness should be conducted. If staff observe a new, concerning illness that cannot be otherwise explained, and the companion animal has had close contact with a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection, the supervising veterinarian should contact the [state public health veterinarian](http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/StatePublicHealthVeterinariansByState.pdf) or designated health official to discuss whether or not there is a need to test that animal for COVID-19. Some jurisdictions do not have state public health veterinarians, or geographic, resource, or time limitations may prevent public health veterinarian from managing a situation involving shelter animals.
3. If you need Shelter Medicine consultation please reach out to the UW Shelter Medicine Program at [UWSheltermedicine@vetmed.wisc.edu](mailto:UWSheltermedicine@vetmed.wisc.edu) for assistance.