

# Pets and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Keeping pets happy and healthy during the outbreak

The COVID-19 crisis has changed many pet owners' daily routines which may in turn affect their pet's routine. Our top tips should help you keep your pet happy and healthy throughout the crisis.

The main source of infection for Covid-19 is human-to-human transmission, and pet owners should not be concerned that their pets are a risk to their health.

### PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORMAL BEHAVIOUR:

- 1 You can walk your dog but check how often you can walk them in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Wales](#). Take care not to over-exercise your pet if they're not used to it and maintain your social distance from people and other dogs by keeping them on a lead.
- 2 If your cat is used to going outside then it is important not to force them to stay in.
- 3 Maintain good hand hygiene before and after handling your pet
- 4 Giving your pets suitable activity toys and puzzle feeders can be good mental stimulation. For some pets, training and games built into their routine can help keep them occupied.
- 5 Make sure your pet is prepared for the end of lockdown. Maintaining your normal routine and being consistent will help them know when to expect attention from you and when it is time to relax. Include short periods of separation and rest into each day.



### SPENDING TIME TOGETHER AND APART:

- 1 Many dogs suffer from separation problems. Now is a good time to teach your dog that it is ok to be alone.
- 2 If your pet is used to being on their own, make sure they are apart from you regularly during lockdown so that your return to work doesn't cause problems.
- 3 If you have several pets in your family, allow them to spend time away from one another if they want to.
- 4 Never leave pets and children unsupervised together. Familiarise yourself with the signs pets use to tell us how they are feeling so that you can keep your pets happy and your child safe.



### PROVIDING A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE HOME:

- 1 Keep your home free from hazards and regularly check and clean bedding, hutches and enclosures.
- 2 When you were working or at school your pet had lots of quiet time during the day, so make sure you provide a quiet, comfortable place where they can rest and sleep undisturbed. Give cats a quiet place to hide such as a box or igloo bed.
- 3 Provide frequent, safe and supervised opportunities for dogs to go to the toilet, but keep your distance from others and minimise time outside your property.
- 4 For indoor cats, make sure each one has access to their own clean toilet areas that are quiet and easily accessible.



### PROVIDING SUITABLE FOOD:

- 1 Try to feed your pets as normal. This will help keep a regular daily routine.
- 2 Only introduce new foods if you have to. Make changes gradually to avoid your pet's stomach becoming upset. Make sure they always have easy access to clean, fresh water, adding extra bowls if needed.
- 3 Don't be tempted to give your pet extra titbits now that you are spending more time with them. There are helpful tools online to help you work out how much to feed your [dog](#) & [cat](#)
- 4 Monitor your pet's weight and body shape regularly and take action to combat any changes.



### STAYING HEALTHY:

- 1 If your pet is sick or injured, it is important to **call your vet first, don't go to the surgery** unless advised to do so by them. Remote consultations are an effective way to get veterinary help for your pet.
- 2 Your vet will be able to advise on your pet's vaccinations and other routine treatments, which will vary depending on locality, breed, age and lifestyle.
- 3 Only play with safe toys, be aware of hazards and poisons, look after their coats with regular grooming, prevent any escape opportunities, check for ticks and fleas and regularly check rabbits' tails to ensure they are clean.
- 4 Make an emergency pet care plan for your pet so that if you do become too ill to look after them, they will be well cared for.



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