Pets and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Advice to help owners worried about their pet

Collective efforts to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) have had a significant impact on all of our lives. Many of us share our homes with pets, but the current situation can make it difficult to find help if we're worried about their health and welfare. The UK's best loved national pet charities and experts have come together to try and help.

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.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR PET'S HEALTH:

1. If your pet is sick or injured, it is important to call your vet first, don't go to the surgery unless advised by them to do so.

2. Vets are working hard to remain open, and while not all services are possible at this time, you can still get advice by phone or online. Pets will only be seen face-to-face if deemed absolutely necessary by your vet.

3. Your vet will be able to advise on your pet's vaccinations and other routine treatments depending on their situation, which will vary from one area to another.

4. You can find information on how to look after your pet's coat during lockdown here.

5. Keep your pet safe and healthy by using suitable toys, being aware of hazards and poisons, stopping any escape opportunities, avoiding giving them too many treats and maintaining their normal diet if possible.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT PAYING FOR YOUR PET'S CARE:

1. Do you have friends or family who could help or contribute?

2. Local food banks may be able to supply you with pet food.

3. You may find other local shops are cheaper places to buy food.

4. PDSA, RSPCA, Blue Cross and Wood Green can help some people with vet costs by providing free or low-cost treatment.

5. Keep up with your pet's insurance cover, or seek advice on an appropriate insurance policy to guard against unexpected vet costs.

To find out more visit: cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus

Advice may be subject to change, so please regularly check Government guidance:
www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR PET'S BEHAVIOUR:

1. Being at home all day may affect your pet's normal routine which can cause behavioural changes. Try to allow them time to rest and sleep as much as usual. Make sure your pet is prepared for the end of lockdown and you leaving them again, by including short periods of separation into the day.

2. Never leave dogs and children together unsupervised. Familiarise yourself with the signs dogs use to tell us how they are feeling so you can keep your dog happy and your child safe.

3. Regular exercise and mental stimulation can help improve your pet's wellbeing.

4. Changes in behaviour sometimes indicate health problems so call your vet for advice before talking to a behaviourist. Do not go to the surgery unless advised by the vet to do so.

5. If you need advice charities can help: Cats Protection, Dogs Trust, Battersea, Wood Green, the Pet Support Line: 0300 303 9333 and the Blue Cross Behaviour helpline: 0300 777 1975.

6. If you need a behaviourist to help you manage your pet's behaviour, ensure they are a qualified professional by visiting the Animal Behaviour & Training Council: ABTC

IF YOU CAN NO LONGER KEEP YOUR PET:

1. For a short-term issue, could a friend or family member take care of your pet until you are able to? Are there any local services which could support you such as a kennel or cattery?

2. For more long-term issues, sometimes the most responsible thing to do is find a new home for your pet. Please contact a reputable rehoming charity to help you. Visit the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes for details.

3. Giving up your pet need only be a last resort. Whilst charities are very stretched by the Coronavirus pandemic they will do their best to help advise you on how to manage your pet during lockdown and beyond.

4. Do reach out and ask for help. We are here to support you and your pet.