National Indian Health Board

NATIONAL TRIBAL COVID-19 RESPONSE

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | www.nihb.org

COVID-19 and Animals

COVID-19 (the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus) is a respiratory illness that was discovered in late 2019 in humans. Scientists believe that the the virus was likely first contracted by a human from a sick animal, likely a bat. Additionally, there have been several reported cases of animals, including pets, contracting the virus. In many American Indian/Alaska Native households, pets and other animals are seen like another member of the family. Because of this, people may have concerns over interacting with pets and livestock. **It is important to note that, based on the available information to date, the risk of animals spreading SARS-CoV-2 to people is considered to be low.**

Can My Animal Get Me Sick?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that **there is currently no evidence that pets or livestock play a significant role in spreading COVID-19.** Some coronaviruses that infect animals can be spread to people and then spread between people, but this is rare. This is what happened with SARS-CoV-2, which likely originated in bats.

The current understanding is that most people who get sick contracted the virus directly from another person. However, experts are not ruling out the possibility that the virus can spread from people to animals in some situations, especially during close contact. More studies are needed to understand if and how animals could be affected by COVID-19.

To protect yourself and your animals, you should always wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before and after handling animals. Because animals carry germs that can make people sick, you should also practice good animal hygiene and clean up after your animals properly.

You should treat pets like human family members and distance them from other people and animals while social distancing guidance are in place. Like people, your pets should be kept at least 6 feet from other people and animals, and you should avoid taking them to public places. You should also avoid contact with animals that are not your own, including stray animals and livestock. People with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should avoid contact with animals, including pets, livestock, and wildlife.

I Think I Have COVID-19, Now What?

If you think you are sick with COVID-19, you should try to stay away from your pet and any other animals. Ask someone else to take care of your animals if possible. Avoid close contact. If you must take care of an animal yourself, wear a face covering and wash your hands frequently, and for at least 20 seconds.

For more information, or to learn more about frequently asked questions, visit the CDC website.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html

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