



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Advice for pet owners isolating because of Monkey Pox

June 2022



© Crown copyright 2022

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ or email PSI@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Data Protection:

For information on how we handle personal data visit www.gov.uk and search Animal and Plant Health Agency Personal Information Charter.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

webmaster@apha.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/apha

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

Contents

Purpose	1
General information on pets and Monkey Pox	1
Pets from households with someone isolating due to Monkey Pox	2
PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)	4
Cleansing and Disinfection	4
Potential Monkey Pox symptoms in your pet and possible treatment options.....	5
Caring for pets that need non-routine veterinary attention from households where individuals are self-isolating	6
Advice where pet owners are in vulnerable groups	7
Annex.....	8
General Information.....	8
Monkeypox: UKHSA Guidance for self-isolation and environmental cleaning and decontamination	8

Purpose

To provide advice for pet owners who are isolating as they are infected by Monkey Pox virus. Their virus could possibly impact their pet(s) so how to deal with their pet while the owner is isolating and how to proceed if a pet needs veterinary attention while the owner is isolating are covered.

General information on pets and Monkey Pox

During the current human Monkey Pox outbreak there is a significant likelihood that pet animals may come into close contact with people infected by Monkey Pox virus. The Monkey Pox virus doesn't easily spread person to person. It can enter the body through broken skin, the respiratory tract or mucous membranes (surface of your eyes, gums etc). It is likely that animals are not easily infected by a positive person either, but infection would be via the same routes.

Worldwide there is little data on the potential for Monkey Pox virus to infect (or be carried by) many animal species, including those commonly kept as pets in the UK. Animal species at known risk of infection are: primates (New and Old world monkeys and apes) and rodents including rats, mice, dormice, cotton rats, prairie dogs and squirrels, while some rodents such as guinea pigs, hamsters, white mice and white rats and other species such as rabbits are less susceptible (see annex for more information and a general review on animal infection). There is little evidence to date that dogs and cats are productively infected with Monkey Pox virus, and no evidence of reptiles, amphibians, fish or invertebrates (such as spiders or stick insects) becoming infected.

There is no evidence of Monkey Pox virus currently affecting pets in the UK and human-to-human transmission is likely to be responsible for the burden of disease in people in the UK. Pets, which have been in contact with an infected owner, may act as a carrier of the virus on their fur or skin etc for some time, just as the virus can persist in a suitable environment.

UKHSA have published advice (see annex at end for links to this material) and an individual person's Health Protection Team (HPT) will give specific instructions and guidance to a person affected by Monkey Pox virus to help stop other people from becoming infected. Similar precautions should be taken to stop individual animals becoming infected or contaminated, including those living in the household the person is isolating in. In addition, for people risk assessed as category 2 (who should not attend work if it may involve contact with vulnerable people) by the Health Protection Team then if such an individual's job involves close contact with and/or care for the high risk animal species (primate and rodent species) listed above they may need to stop work or have their duties changed, until they are advised they can return to work.

Similar to the general advice on COVID-19, if you think you may have been in contact with someone affected by Monkey Pox virus or you suspect you are infected or have tested positive then you should take precautions to stop other people and animals from becoming inadvertently infected. Therefore, you should:

- wash your hands regularly, including before and after you come into contact with animals and pets.
- minimise contact with your pet(s) and your pet's items such as bedding, bowls, water bottles, feeders and toys.

Monkey Pox virus can be transmitted via droplets or from shed skin lesions and can survive in the environment for a substantial period of time (many weeks rather than days), so steps to not only minimise direct contact with your pet(s) but also to avoid contaminating their environment are very important.

Links to UKHSA advice to minimise transmission of infection:

- [Monkeypox: background information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/monkeypox-background-information)
- [and self-isolation guidance:](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-people-with-monkeypox-infection-who-are-isolating-at-home>

Pets from households with someone isolating due to Monkey Pox

During the initial risk assessment by the Health Protection Team (HPT) the infected person will be asked if they have animal contact such as having a pet in the household, so this information can be passed to the relevant government Duty Vet in the respective administrative region by the HPT and guidance can be given on how to protect your pet.

To protect your pet, we recommend keeping them away from the infected person as much as possible, until that person has ended the necessary period for their isolation. If the pet is a rodent or rabbit or other exotic small mammal, they should be kept in their cage. No pet should be able to freely roam throughout the household and so enter the room(s) used by the isolating infected person. Ideally the pet(s) should be cared for by someone who is unaffected, remembering to wash hands after every contact. If the only person who can care for the household animals is infected, they will need to continue to care for their pet's needs. Contact with the pet should be minimised and any area of skin with pox lesion or a scab should be covered if located in an area where the pet may be able to rub against or lick. Where an infected person is caring for the animal, or when it is a small home where someone else is feeding the pet which is still living in the same room as the infected person, then once the infected person has been told they can finish isolating from other people their pet could still be contaminated/ infected. Therefore, the pet should continue to be isolated from other people and animals (i.e., those living in other households) until 21 days have passed since the last contact with the isolating person or from the end of the person's isolation.

This guidance is to provide information about what you as an animal keeper should do if you are isolating due to Monkey Pox virus. If possible, to protect your pet/animal, it is preferable for someone else in the household who is not infected by Monkey Pox virus to care for the animal(s) that are present. Pet owners (and anyone else present who is infected by Monkey Pox virus) who must handle pets or associated bedding and equipment should observe normal hygiene measures. Handling pets or associated equipment can lead to cross-contamination so the animal could potentially carry the virus on its fur after being touched by a person with Monkey Pox, in the same way that any other object or surface can be contaminated. Viruses in the same family as Monkey Pox virus are resistant to drying and in the right circumstances contamination on environmental surfaces, including fabrics, can remain infectious for many weeks. If your animals are still closely associated with the infected person who is isolating then the animal and its bedding may be superficially contaminated by virus. See the Cleansing and Disinfecting section below.

If your pet is ill or injured (for any reason, not necessarily due to infection with Monkey Pox virus) you may need to seek advice and/or treatment from your vet. Pet owners remain responsible for ensuring the welfare of their animal(s) and for seeking veterinary advice even if ill themselves. If your pet needs veterinary attention, you should telephone your veterinary practice and if your pet needs to be examined by your vet you need to alert the practice about your Monkey Pox situation. Non-urgent pet' appointments, such as for vaccination, weight checks, grooming etc, should have such appointments delayed until no-one in the house is isolating and the pet has observed a further 21-day isolation from the time that the last infected person came out of isolation. The 21-day period is not required if no one with clinical disease was isolating.

We have provided guidance for private vets to help them consider the risks to their staff and other animals and people at the veterinary practice and mitigate those risks as well as possible. In terms of protecting public health the preference would be for a virtual consultation to enable appropriate veterinary advice to be given, but for many situations a physical examination of your pet will be necessary.

Your veterinary practice may need to use a specific part of their premises to examine your pet or may need to coordinate with an alternative vet practice who can accommodate your pet's examination. It is also recognised that there may well be emergency situations, such as accidents, where there may be no option but an urgent visit to the surgery and possibly subsequent hospitalisation of your pet.

No one infected (or who suspects they may be infected) by Monkey Pox virus should take a pet to the vet. If you have no one who can help the vet practice may be able to make arrangements to collect your pet so it can be examined or to visit your home, but even at home assessing the pet in a potentially uncontaminated place such as a secure yard or in a shed will be preferable if possible. The veterinary staff will need to wear appropriate protective clothing to reduce the risk of becoming infected (your pet does not need to be ill

to carry contamination to the vet practice) and if your pet has symptoms that might be caused by Monkey Pox virus and/or if the vet staff need to come into direct contact with you or your home they will need to undertake extra precautions to protect their health.

If you have to go to the clinic in an emergency still let the practice staff know your Monkey Pox situation before entering the building. You may be unaware that specific members of the practice's staff may be immunocompromised and so at greater risk, but even very short notice of your intended arrival will help avoid the spread of infection to other people or pets.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

Vet practice staff will need to use some personal protective equipment to protect themselves and others from droplets and direct contact from virus-contaminated pets. They will be following the UKHSA infection prevention and control guidance.

Cleansing and Disinfection

If possible, it is preferable for someone else in the household who is not infected by Monkey Pox virus to care for the animal(s) that are present to minimise the potential for them and their bedding etc to become physically contaminated by virus, or even, for some animal species, to become infected. Pet-associated waste such as litter tray contents, moulted and groomed off fur, bedding for caged pets, uneaten food etc may be physically contaminated by virus and so should be double bagged (i.e. place the material in a refuse bag and seal it and then place that bag in a second outer bag and seal that too: this lessens the risk of the bag later leaking and possibly exposing other individuals and animals to infectious material) and all such waste should be placed in the domestic waste stream using a secure bin that cannot be accessed by wild animals etc.

You should NOT use household and commercial cleaning products, anti-viral sprays or wipes or other disinfectants on pets. Only use products designed for use on animals as directed to do so by your veterinary surgeon. If you wish to wash your pet during your self-isolation you may do so, but minimising contact between infected people and their pets is the best approach, rather than undertaking regular washing. If you choose to wash your pet you should use a pet-safe shampoo, following the manufacturer's instructions. Too-frequent bathing can be detrimental to your pets' skin and coat.

If you are infected, the end of your isolation period will be decided by public health staff according to your clinical situation. For close contacts of an infected person it is after 21 days. At this point, if an infected person has been living in the home, cleaning and disinfection of your house is a key step in removing infectious virus. If you were infected and have pets then when your household is de-contaminated then we anticipate your animals may need to be washed at the same time, depending on their level of contact during isolation with the infected person.

The presence of Monkey Pox virus may result in the increased use of disinfectants, hand gels and other cleaning products in your household. If you are worried about any chemicals or other substances that may have affected or contaminated your pet you should call your vet or the Animal Poison Line on 01202 509000 (fees may be charged) for advice.

Cleaning around pet rodents can be more challenging, in part as they can carry other infections that can affect people. Therefore, additional guidance on safe cleaning may need to be considered and is available:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322016/Guidance_on_reducing_the_risk_of_human_infection_from_pet_rodents.pdf

Potential Monkey Pox symptoms in your pet and possible treatment options

The appearance of symptoms caused by Monkey Pox virus, including the presence of visible skin changes, will depend on the species and age of your animal. Individual animals may not present any symptoms of infection but may still carry the virus on their fur. Detailed descriptions of symptoms that may develop in different animal species can be consulted [HERE](#).

In animal species that do become ill if infected by Monkey Pox virus a number of possible symptoms may be seen:

- Increase in body temperature
- Appetite changes
- Conjunctivitis and/or discharge from eyes
- Coughing or sneezing or wheezing
- Skin changes which may or may not appear itchy
- Possible small swellings visible under the skin (these are due to reactions in the animal's lymph nodes which are situated in specific areas of the body. They form a defence system to stop infection spreading around the body)

If an animal does get symptoms because of Monkey Pox virus it may have one or several of these symptoms, so being sure it is definitely infected is not necessarily easy. Speak to your vet about what to do.

There are no licensed veterinary treatments for animals infected by Monkey Pox virus. Your vet may consider prescribing symptomatic and/or supportive treatment if your pet becomes ill to help it feel better. Monkey Pox infections are self-limiting infections and the

particular strain of Monkey Pox virus currently circulating in the UK in people is a mild strain.

See attached Annex for further information on clinical signs.

Caring for pets that need non-routine veterinary attention from households where individuals are self-isolating

People who are self-isolating for Monkey Pox virus are being asked as part of the initial public health investigation to notify their respective Health Protection Team (UKHSA in England, PHS in Scotland, PHW in Wales or PHA NI) that they have or live with a pet or pets. The Health Protection Team can in turn notify an appropriate government veterinarian who will use a triage system to help make a decision about the pet. Therefore, you may receive a call from a government vet about your animals (no contact will be made if your only pets are reptiles, amphibians, fish or invertebrates - such as a spider or a stick insect). As far as possible, your pet will remain in the household with you whilst you are self-isolating and you will receive advice regarding caring for your pet during this period. It is paramount that you let officials know if it develops any symptoms that may be due to Monkey Pox virus. If this is the case you should contact the Health Protection Team who will notify APHA accordingly, or if you have already been contacted by an APHA vet in relation to MPXv then you can alternatively contact that vet directly if you have their contact details. In the event that no one is available to care for the pet, or if there is a known rodent infestation in the household (as it is more likely for rodents to become infected and so possibly transmit infection) a decision may be taken to take the pet to the safety of a government facility for monitoring for a period of 21 days. Testing may also be considered for pets which remain in the household.

Ideally pets should be cared for by asymptomatic household members. Once you have been told you can stop isolating you are no longer a risk for infecting other people or the pet, but the pet should remain isolated from people and animals from other households until 21 days have passed since their last contact with the infected person or if in contact then 21 days after the infected person could start to go out again. If you are not sure how best to meet their needs please contact your vet for advice on what is best for the animal's health and welfare. In circumstances where there is no one left in the home to care for them (such as hospitalised for Monkey Pox treatment), you will need to discuss what to do with your private vet.

Advice where pet owners are in vulnerable groups

If a vulnerable person (e.g., immunocompromised) lives in a household where someone is infected by Monkey Pox virus and there are pets present it is especially important that the pet is managed to observe the isolation too. Generally, the pet should be kept away from direct contact with the infected person and be looked after by other household members, including the vulnerable individual (if permitted by the Health Protection Team). If they are the sole remaining occupant due to hospitalisation of other household members because of Monkey Pox and it is not medically appropriate for them to care for the pet then arrange for the care of the pet(s) with your vet. In exceptional circumstances, an Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) official vet may be able to assist with organising alternative animal accommodation. (The Health Protection Team have access to the appropriate contact numbers for the official vet for your area).

Annex

General Information

[HAIRS risk assessment: monkeypox - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hairst-risk-assessment-monkeypox)

[Principles for monkeypox control in the UK: 4 nations consensus statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/principles-for-monkeypox-control-in-the-uk)

[Monkeypox: background information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/monkeypox-background-information)

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/veterinarian/examination.html#:~:text=Symptoms%20that%20were%20observed%20in,monkeypox%20virus%20in%20research%20studies>

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/monkeypox.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/veterinarian/index.html>

[A review of experimental and natural infections of animals with monkeypox virus between 1958 and 2012 - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23111111/)

[Monkeypox \(iastate.edu\)](https://www.iastate.edu/~iastate/monkeypox/)

Monkeypox: UKHSA Guidance for self-isolation and environmental cleaning and decontamination

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-people-with-monkeypox-infection-who-are-isolating-at-home>

Monkeypox: guidance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/monkeypox-guidance)) [Monkeypox: background information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/monkeypox-background-information)