



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 15/20

Advice for UK Government Working Animals during COVID-19 Epidemic

Date issued: 06 April 2020 – updated 27 July 2020

We have confirmed historical infection in one cat in the UK, from a household with COVID-19 infected humans. The cat had been co-infected with another respiratory virus but has now made a full recovery. There was no transmission to other cats in the household. There is no evidence of virus circulating between pets in the UK and we still consider human-to-human transmission is responsible for the burden of disease in the UK. While we do not consider there is a substantial risk that working animals will become infected with the virus, there is a risk they could carry the virus on their hair for a short time, just as other surfaces or objects can carry the virus from one place to another.

In line with the general advice on COVID-19, you should wash your hands regularly including before and after you come into contact with any animal.

There is no scientific evidence that washing animals is necessary to control the spread of COVID-19.

Importantly, you should not take measures that compromise the welfare of the animals in your care unless there is robust evidence to do so.

Care of working animals during the COVID-19 epidemic:

DO

- Continue to work with and care for your animal in the normal manner, as far as possible.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water before and after contact with your working animal. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing on your working animal. Avoid your animal licking you as far as possible.
- Avoid contact between your working animal and people with COVID-19 or pets living with a person with COVID-19. This may include exercising your animals in areas away from the general public.

- Conduct routine cleaning of animal housing, animal transport and animal working equipment (e.g. harnesses) using your normal detergent and disinfectant. Advice for cleaning objects and surfaces, including suitable disinfectants, can be found on the [Public Health England](#), [Health Protection Scotland](#), [Public Health Wales](#) website.
- If you routinely wash your animal, continue to use your normal animal-safe detergent.
- Contact your veterinary surgeon by telephone if you are concerned about the health of your animal.

Unless directed by government advice or your veterinary surgeon, DO NOT

- Isolate or quarantine animals.
- Restrict exercise for your animal.
- Use disinfectants on animals.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.