



GUIDANCE

Advice for pet owners: coronavirus (COVID-19)

Advice to pet owners on how to care for their pets during the period of COVID-19 control measures.

Part of:

[Animal welfare: pets \(https://gov.wales/animal-welfare-pets\)](https://gov.wales/animal-welfare-pets) and [Caring for animals during the coronavirus outbreak \(https://gov.wales/caring-animals-during-coronavirus-outbreak\)](https://gov.wales/caring-animals-during-coronavirus-outbreak)

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Contents

[General information](#)

[Voluntary GB ferret \(and other Mustelinae\) register](#)

[Ferrets](#)

[Advice on walking your dog](#)

[Cats](#)

[Advice for pet owners who are in high risk groups or self-isolating](#)

[Advice for those walking pets on behalf of someone not able to](#)

Keeping pets happy and healthy

What to do if your pet is ill and needs veterinary attention

Advice for veterinary surgeons

Preventative measures regarding SARS-CoV2

General information on animals and COVID-19

There is no evidence of SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus which causes Covid-19 in people) circulating in pets or other animals in Wales. Worldwide, there have been a very small number of reports of the virus being identified in pet cats and dogs in households where people have COVID-19. In these circumstances, pets became infected from humans. There have been no reports and there is no evidence of pets transmitting the virus to humans.

In line with the **Public Health Wales general advice**

(<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults/>)

on COVID-19, you should wash your hands regularly and before and after you come into contact with animals or pets.

It is possible that the coat and face of pets could be contaminated with virus shed by people, for a short time, just as other surfaces can be.

The measures being taken to control COVID-19 are subject to change, possibly frequently, so do please keep yourself updated with the latest advice and instructions.

Voluntary GB ferret (and other Mustelinae) register

It is possible for mink to infect humans with SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19. Whilst mink farming is banned in the UK, other mammals in the Mustelinae family, such as ferrets, are now known to be highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2. Research has demonstrated that:

- new variants can arise in ferrets and other Mustelinae, and

- they can spread infection within their own species

We have introduced a Ferret and Mustelinae register in Wales, England and Scotland. This is:

- to improve our understanding of the kept ferret population, and
- to inform keepers on how to reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 to their ferrets and themselves

From 17 June 2021, if you keep ferrets or other Mustelinae, we encourage you to register them on the GB Register for Ferrets and other Mustelinae.

This is on a voluntary basis. Other Mustelinae include:

- polecats
- stoats
- mink, or
- hybrids of these animals

You are a keeper if you are responsible for the day-to-day care of the animals. This includes animals kept as pets.

Those who join the Register will receive updates and guidance from the Animal and Plant Health Agency, particularly in the event of a COVID-19 emergency associated with kept Mustelinae. We will use the register to determine the size and location of the kept ferret population. Register data may also be used for tracing infected animals.

If you are a keeper in Wales or England, please register here

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ferret-and-other-mustelinae-register>), or call: 0800 6341112.

If you are a keeper in Scotland, please register here (<https://ferretregister.ahw-scot.org>), or call: 01466 794323.

Plans for compulsory registration

It is our intention to make the GB Ferret Register compulsory in the future. In which case, we may require keepers who own more than a threshold number of Mustelinae to join the register. This will:

- help protect human health if variants of SARS-CoV-2 emerge

- provide ferret keepers with guidance to protect their own health and the health of their animals.

Please note:

Details already on the register will be automatically transferred to the new compulsory system. This is regardless of whether they meet the threshold number. For those under the threshold, registration will remain voluntary and you can ask to remove your data.

We may restrict the movement of animals infected with SARS-CoV-2. This would be in line with the The Zoonoses Order (1989) and The Animal Health Act (1981). A decision to cull animals would only be made in exceptional circumstances. For example, if a ferret borne variant of SARS-CoV-2 becomes severe and threatens public health or vaccine effectiveness.

Ferrets

Ferrets are known to be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19. As a precautionary measure, we would advise isolating your ferrets for 21 days if:

- you or your household are self-isolating
- you have recently returned with your pet through the Pet Travel Scheme back to Wales

Isolation means avoiding contact with either ferrets or people from other households. During the isolation period you should avoid:

- using the ferret as a working animal
- rabbiting, or
- taking it for walks.

If your ferret needs emergency veterinary care, you should contact your vet for further advice.

In-line with the current public health guidance, you should also:

- wash your hands before and after any contact with your pet, its food and bedding
- do not share food with your pet

Advice on walking your dog

Walking your dog is considered to be a form of exercise that is permitted, notwithstanding the general restrictions on people's movements that may be in place at various times. (Remember you should keep at least 2 metres apart from other people outside your household and we advise you to keep the dog on the lead for this reason).

Cats

Cats in households where people have Covid-19 or are self-isolating should be kept indoors, if possible. Otherwise cats can be managed as usual. Further advice is available from the **British Veterinary Association** (<https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/bva-statement-on-cats-and-covid-19/>).

Advice for pet owners who are in high risk groups or self-isolating

You must follow one or more of the following:

- **social distancing guidance** (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance>)
- **guidance for households with possible coronavirus** (<https://gov.wales/self-isolation>)
- **guidance on protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19) - previously known as 'shielding'** (<https://gov.wales/guidance-protecting-people-defined-medical-grounds-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-coronavirus>)

If your dog cannot exercise at home, you may be able to get someone to walk it for you.

Advice for those walking pets on behalf of someone not able to

If you are walking a pet on behalf of someone who is unable to, you should wash your hands before and after handling that pet. You should try to walk the pet on a lead at all times and avoid direct contact with other people and animals. You should

safely hand over a pet at the front door or hallway and avoid contact with the pet's owner.

If you are walking a pet from a household that is showing symptoms of the virus, you should make sure that the pet does not mix with animals from other households.

Keeping pets happy and healthy

Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales (CAWGW), supported by AWW, has issued advice to Welsh pet owners:

- [keeping pets happy and healthy on Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales](https://cawgw.co.uk/news/keeping-pets-happy-and-healthy) (<https://cawgw.co.uk/news/keeping-pets-happy-and-healthy>)

This advice includes:

- preventing separation anxiety
- maintaining a healthy diet, and
- providing a safe and comfortable home

Similar advice issued in England by the Canine and Feline Sector Group.

What to do if your pet is ill and needs veterinary attention

If your pet is injured, sick or needs to receive urgent treatment, phone the vet to arrange the best approach to meet your pet's needs. Make specific arrangements before visiting any vet to minimise any risks of possible virus transmission.

For routine visits to vets, always phone the practice first to discuss your pet's needs.

Advice for veterinary surgeons

The [Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons](https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19/) (<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19/>) and the [British Veterinary Association](https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/) (<https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/>)

[19-updates-for-the-veterinary-profession/](#)) are providing advice to vets on how best to provide their services in changing circumstances.

Preventative measures regarding SARS-CoV2

If you are positive to a COVID-19 test or have symptoms suggestive of it (persistent cough, fever and loss of taste and smell are the most common ones) avoid direct contact, such as touching, petting, playing and grooming, and also indirect contact though touching items or food which your animal will come into contact with.

RELATED

Animal welfare: pets (<https://gov.wales/animal-welfare-pets>)

- **Making SARS-CoV-2 reportable: poster** (<https://gov.wales/making-sars-cov-2-reportable-poster>)