



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt  
Commissioner

CTGrown.gov

## COVID-19 GUIDANCE for MUNICIPAL ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS

*Updated April 15, 2020*

*The practices and protocols below are for municipal animal control officers to implement in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are in addition to guidance provided by the [CDC](#), [USDA](#), and other federal agencies.*

The [University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program](#) and other organizations, including the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, support and recommend municipal animal control agencies follow the recommendations found in [recently released statements from the National Animal Care & Control Association \(NACA\)](#) to the extent possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 carries the possibility of creating significant challenges for Municipal Animal Control due to reduced capacity for care due to staffing shortages, the need for social distancing, and reduced outcome opportunities via adoption, foster or rescue.

NACA's statements incorporate the following key recommendations:

- Animal control agencies should take active measures to eliminate non-essential shelter intake.
- Discontinue low priority/non-emergency activity (non-aggressive stray animal pick-up, nuisance complaints, etc.).
- At this time, continue to respond to emergency and high priority calls (law enforcement assistance, injured or sick stray animals, bite and dangerous dog complaints, etc.).
- To preserve critical medical supplies and minimize the potential for human contact exposure, shelters and spay-neuter clinics should limit surgeries to emergency cases only.

There is currently no evidence of COVID-19 virus being **transmitted** from pets to humans. The World Health Organization (WHO), World Health Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to recommend that pets stay with their people. Previous disasters have demonstrated that pets are integral family members and people will place themselves at significant risk rather than be separated from their animals. Compliance with important recommendations, including disclosure of symptoms or exposure to an infected person, may be compromised if people believe they may be separated from their pets when isolated or quarantined.

People who are sick or infected should limit contact with their pets. People who are sick or under medical attention for COVID-19 should avoid close contact with their pets and have another member of their household care for their animals. If they must look after their pet,

they should maintain good hygiene practices and wear a face covering or face mask if possible.

The WHO, OIE and CDC continue to state:

- The primary risk of COVID-19 transmission to humans remains other humans.
- Limited evidence suggests some companion animals can be **infected** after close contact with humans sick with COVID-19.
- There is no current evidence to suggest that pets play a role in the spread of this disease to humans.
- The WHO, OIE and CDC continue to recommend that pets stay with their people and that people who are sick or infected limit contact with their pets.

To emphasize the point of maintaining officer safety, if a pet is surrendered or must be removed from a household where COVID-19 has been diagnosed or is under self-isolation due to suspected COVID-19 illness or exposure to COVID-19, Municipal Animal Control Officers should review [NACA](#), [University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program](#) and [American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\)](#) interim recommendations and formulate policies and procedures for their organizations.

Some Municipal Animal Control organizations may not be able to fully follow the recommendations due to shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as N95 respirators and disposable outer garments. In this case, extra-care in maintaining social distancing and hygiene should be practiced. The AVMA has produced guidance on conserving PPE: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/COVID-19/guidelines-ppe-COVID-19-pandemic-demand-exceeds>. Washable coveralls if used, should be laundered using hot water and dried on high heat between uses.

The DEMHS regional ESF-11 coordinators are an available resource for Municipal Animal Control Offices. Your municipality's emergency management director should have the contact information for your region's ESF-11 coordinator.

If you have specific COVID-19 questions, please contact the Department at [AGR.Covid19@ct.gov](mailto:AGR.Covid19@ct.gov)