



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers

FROM: Harold Mackin, Education Consultant

DATE: October 29, 2020

SUBJECT: Recommendations for Animal Care and Use in Instructional Programs

The recommendations and resources are being provided for Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) Centers to assist in providing safe practices for students and staff while maintaining animal care and use in instruction in coping with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The recommendations within are being provided based on the knowledge that cats (domestic and large cats), mink, and dogs have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the field setting, following contact with humans known or suspected to be infected with SARS-CoV-2. In the field setting cats have shown clinical signs of disease including respiratory and gastro-intestinal signs. SARS-CoV-2 infection in farmed mink has been characterized by respiratory disease and an increased mortality rate.¹

Although several animal species have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, these infections are not a driver of the COVID-19 pandemic; the pandemic is driven by human-to-human transmission.

Recommendations:

- Students and staff should follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidelines for schools](#).
- Given that dogs and cats can be infected with the virus, cats and dogs should not be allowed in ASTE Centers.²
- When handling and caring for animals, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented. This includes wearing masks, hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing, being licked by animals, or sharing food.
- Limit the human contact and minimize the size of groups around animals.
- Animal facilities need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly with an animal- safe, EPA-approved disinfectant.
- Animal handling equipment should be of non-porous material so it can be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use.
- Clean and disinfect items such as toys, collars, leashes, harnesses, and food/water bowls frequently.

1. <https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>

2. https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/sa_one_health/sars-cov-2-animals-us

- Do not wipe or bathe animals with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use. There is no evidence that the virus can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets.
- Do not put face coverings on animals. Covering an animal's face could harm the animal.

As a reminder, all ASTE Centers should follow the state guidance on cleaning and sanitation for faculty, students and facilities found in the [Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#) document. ASTE Center staff should continuously revisit district reopening plans to understand district and school protocols and expectations for teaching and learning with animals.

Education Resources:

- How to Stay Healthy Around Pets Poster, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pdfs/publications/how-to-stay-healthy-around-pets-H.pdf>
- Education materials on staying healthy around pets, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/index.html>

Other Resources:

- Guidance for animals in public settings: <http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendiumAnimals.html>
- Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel, <http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendiaVet.html>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC) COVID-19 Recommendations for Pet Stores, Pet Distributors, and Pet Breeding Facilities; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/pet-store.html>
- National Institute of Health, Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, COVID-19 Pandemic Contingency Planning for Animal Care and Use Programs; <https://olaw.nih.gov/covid-19.htm>
- World Small Animal Veterinary Association Advice for Animal Welfare Organizations during the COVID-19 Pandemic; https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Organisations_WSAVA-Animal-Welfare-Advice-during-COVID-19.pdf
- CDC If You Have Pets Guidelines, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html>
- CDC Guidance for schools and child care programs, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Should you need additional information regarding the recommendations for animal care and use in instructional programs, please contact Harold Mackin at 860-713-6779 or at Harold.Mackin@ct.gov.

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