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Departments of Agriculture, Health Confirm Pennsylvania's First COVID-19 Positive Cat

State Veterinarian Provides Recommendations to Keep Companion Animals Healthy

Harrisburg, PA – State Veterinarian Dr. Kevin Brightbill announced today that Pennsylvania has confirmed its first COVID-19 positive cat.

The 16-year old Cumberland County cat, who lived in a household with multiple individuals who had previously been diagnosed with COVID-19, presented in early October with mild respiratory illness. Unfortunately, as a result of respiratory distress, the cat was humanely euthanized. The case is still under investigation, and a primary cause of death has not yet been confirmed.

The Pennsylvania cat is one of a handful of COVID-19 positive pets from across the United States that died or were euthanized while infected. All pets infected had known prolonged exposure to COVID-19 individuals and none to date appear to have died from COVID-19. Instead, other serious underlying illnesses are attributable to cause of death.

"As Pennsylvanians have spent more time at home throughout the pandemic, our companion animals have undoubtedly been the recipients of extra love and attention," said Dr. Brightbill. "If you or a loved one becomes diagnosed with COVID-19, take steps to keep your pet healthy, just as you would your family."

Many of the same recommendations for protecting people apply to animals. To help protect Pennsylvania pets, households with COVID-19 positive individuals should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Avoid contact with pets and other animals, as you would other people.
- Arrange for another household member to care for your pet(s) while you or family members are in isolation.
- Avoid contact such as petting, holding, snuggling, facial contact, and sleeping in the same bed.
- Wear a mask and wash your hands before feeding or tending to your pet if you are unable to find alternative care for them.

Symptoms of COVID-19 in pets includes fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, nose or eye discharge, vomiting, or diarrhea. If your pet exhibits symptoms after contact with a person positive for COVID-19, contact your private veterinarian.

At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading COVID-19 to people. COVID-19 is mainly spread through person-to-person contact.

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness.

These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store by searching for "covid alert pa."

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- Daily COVID-19 Report
- Press releases regarding coronavirus
- Latest information on the coronavirus
- Photos of the state's lab in Exton (for download and use)
- Coronavirus and preparedness graphics (located at the bottom of the page)
- Community preparedness and procedures materials

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts