

Animals and Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. The animal species have their own coronaviruses that cause a variety of illnesses, for example the dog and cat coronaviruses that are quite common do not cause illness to humans. The current coronavirus, Covid-19, is still under a lot of investigation but they are suspecting that it started with bats in an open food market in China. We have learned through research that viruses can mutate and that is how we end up with different strains, such as the different flu viruses that they must discover a new vaccine for every year. A lot of viruses mutate randomly and by accident and that is how they multiply and spread.

The viruses that are similar but different from Covid-19 have been shown in exceedingly rare cases to spread from humans to cats, ferrets and pigs. There is no current evidence to show that a naturally infected animal is capable of transmitting disease back to humans. The risk to our beloved pets is low and unlikely that we could transmit it to them. But researchers are still learning new information about the virus every day.

Are you wondering if the virus can survive on the fur of your pet? They are unsure about the current virus but viruses in the past have not been found to survive for any length of time on fur. With the current virus the understanding is that pets do not play a role in transmission to humans. But always remember to be safe and wash your hands, you never can be too careful in these changing times.

Shari Camp, RVT

Greater Cincinnati Veterinary Specialist and Emergency Services