

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Virus and Pets As of 11/6/2009

Information for Owners

Pets that live indoors, especially cats, tend to have close contact with their owners and that increases their chances of being exposed to human diseases. Always follow common sense when dealing with animals, including washing your hands before and after handling them. It is also important to keep a good eye on your pet's health and consult a veterinarian if there are signs of illness.

Q. Can my pet get infected with pandemic H1N1 influenza virus?

- Based on current information, transmission to certain species of pets from infected owners is presumed to be possible, and prolonged contact with pandemic flu in the household is likely necessary for transmission to occur.

Based on current information, the following indicates the susceptibility of different species.

Possible	Unlikely	Unknown
Cat		Dog
Ferret		Rabbits
Pot Belly Pig		Rodents
		Horses
		Pet Birds

Q. Can I get pandemic H1N1 Influenza from my pet?

- The primary transmission of this virus has been human-to-human. There is no evidence of transmission from pets to people. Good sanitation and reduced contact should be followed if influenza-like illness is suspected in a pet.

Q. What do I do if I am sick with flu-like symptoms and I have pets?

- Owners should treat their pets as other members of the family by minimizing contact until all symptoms have subsided, and practicing sanitary cough and sneeze etiquette. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you minimize contact with others when you are ill.
- If possible, designate a healthy family member to care for pets as you would children.

Q. What signs should I look for that might suggest that my pet has pandemic H1N1 Influenza?

- At this time, there are no specific clinical signs identifying pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus infection in pets. Clinical signs in the confirmed positive cat presented at Iowa State University Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center included non-specific malaise (lethargy and loss of appetite) with mild respiratory disease (difficult breathing.)
- Signs reflecting respiratory disease could be expected, including coughing, sneezing, fever and weakness as seen in the confirmed ferret cases.
- If you suspect that your pet has pandemic H1N1 or is having difficulty breathing, consult your veterinarian.

Q. What do I do if I suspect my pet has pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus?

- If members of your household have had flu-like symptoms and your pet appears ill, contact your veterinarian immediately and minimize contact with the animal.
- If there are multiple pets in the household, minimize animal-to-animal contact.
- Wash hands frequently after handling pets or pet items (bowls, beds, toys, etc.).

Q. What is my veterinarian going to do to confirm infection?

- The veterinarian will examine your pet and may send samples to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory for testing to confirm an infection.

Q. If my pet is confirmed to have pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus, what happens next?

- If care is being done at home, isolate the sick animal in a separate room from other pets and minimize contact as much as possible until symptoms subside.
- Try to avoid sharing bowls, blankets and other items between pets while one is ill.
- Wash hands frequently after handling pets or bowls, toys, beds, etc.
- Clean isolation area and pet items. Sanitize impervious items with household bleach in a 1:10 dilution.
- Minimize human contact to animal body secretions by wearing gloves while handling pets or pet items.
- Minimize likelihood of being bitten or scratched.

Q. Can my other pets of the same species get pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus from an infected pet?

- Experimental data shows influenza transmission can occur between the same species, although there is currently no such data regarding H1N1 in cats. It is recommended that you isolate the affected animal from healthy animals and humans while clinical signs are present.

Q. What treatments are available for my pet for pandemic H1N1 influenza?

- Supportive care and/or prophylactic treatment for secondary bacterial infection can be recommended by your veterinarian based on the clinical signs.
- There is no vaccine available for pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus.