

Can pets get monkeypox? It's rare but experts say yes—here is what to know

August 16 2022, by Adrianna Rodriguez



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As U.S. health officials struggle to contain the monkeypox outbreak, some pet owners wonder if their four-legged companions could be at risk.

Researchers discovered it's possible after identifying a case of monkeypox in a dog in Paris, France, according to a study published in *The Lancet* last week.

The dog may have gotten the infection from its owners, the [case study](#) suggested, who are two men who have sex with men. Twelve days after they began exhibiting symptoms, lesions appeared on their Italian greyhound.

Study authors suggest the dog may have gotten infected while sharing a bed with its owners. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says monkeypox can spread by touching fabrics like bedding.

Armed with this information, here's everything experts want you to know to keep your canine or feline friend safe.

Can my pet get monkeypox?

Although the *The Lancet* study shows it's possible for pets to get monkeypox, health experts say it's rare.

"The risk is extremely low," said Dr. Lori Teller, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association. "The way our pets would most likely catch it is through extremely close contact."

So far, there have been no reported cases in cats, [guinea pigs](#) or hamsters but Teller said research shows rabbits and mice can get the virus. A 2003 outbreak of monkeypox in the U.S. also showed [prairie dogs](#) can contract the virus, the CDC said.

Signs, symptoms of monkeypox in pets

The CDC said potential signs of illness among pets include fatigue, lack of appetite, coughing, nasal secretions or crust, bloating and fever.

However, "it's important to keep in mind those are common symptoms of a lot of respiratory diseases or viral infections," Teller said.

Even monkeypox's distinctive lesions, which may appear as a pimple- or blister-like rash, "can look like so many things," she said.

If a rash or two other clinical symptoms appear on a pet within 21 days of exposure, the CDC urges people to notify their veterinarian to get a professional assessment.

What should I do if my pet has monkeypox?

If a pet has probable or confirmed monkeypox, health experts recommend separating it from other animals and minimizing direct contact with people for at least 21 days, if symptoms resolve.

Owners should wash their hands frequently and use [personal protective equipment](#) like gloves, eye protection, a well-fitting mask and a disposable gown when caring for or cleaning up after sick animals, according to CDC guidance.

If a disposable gown is not available, the agency recommends wearing clothes that fully cover the skin. After handling the pet and its belongings, immediately remove and launder the contaminated clothing. Other precautions include dedicating a lined trash can to dispose contaminated waste, and disinfecting bedding, enclosures and food dishes after direct contact.

Teller said owners should avoid direct [physical contact](#) as much as possible but still recommends taking pets outside for exercise.

"We know the spread of monkeypox comes with very close contact," she said. "If you're out walking your dog ... they're not likely to have close contact with other animals or people."

What NOT to do if a pet is infected

First and foremost, [health experts](#) say Americans should not surrender, euthanize or abandon pets with a potential exposure or confirmed monkeypox.

"We saw people surrendering their pets during COVID even though the risk was extremely low," Teller said. "So, we don't want to see that happen again with monkeypox."

The CDC also warns against wiping or bathing a pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, [hydrogen peroxide](#), hand sanitizer, counter-cleaning wipes or other cleaners.

I have monkeypox: How can I protect my pet?

If the pet was not exposed, Teller recommends asking a friend or family member to take care of the pet in a separate home while the person with monkeypox remains in isolation for the duration of their illness.

The CDC does not recommend leaving a pet with another caretaker if the person with [monkeypox](#) had close contact with the animal including petting, cuddling, hugging, kissing, licking, sharing sleeping areas and sharing food.

Pets that have had close contact should be kept at home and away from other animals and people for 21 days. If possible, the CDC recommends another member of the household care for the pet.

If an infected pet owner must care for their healthy pets during isolation, Teller said the person should wash their hands before and after caring for them. She said it's important to wear clothing that covers the rash, gloves, and a well-fitting mask.

Owners should also make sure their pets can't inadvertently come into contact with contaminated fabrics like sheets, towels, and clothing, the CDC said. It's also important to ensure the pet's food, toys, bedding or other items didn't come in direct contact with the owner's skin or uncovered rash.

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Citation: Can pets get monkeypox? It's rare but experts say yes—here is what to know (2022, August 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-08-pets-monkeypox-rare-experts-yeshere.html>

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