

Guidance on Mpox and Animals

Mpox (previously called monkeypox) is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can spread between animals and people. In the current mpox outbreak, people have gotten mpox from other people (human-to-human transmission). However, in 2003, 47 people were diagnosed with mpox after they came into contact with domesticated prairie dogs that had shared bedding and caging with a shipment of infected small mammals from West Africa. This prior situation shows the risk of animal-to-animal and animal-to-person transmission. It is possible that people with mpox can spread the virus to animals as well, from close contact or contact with contaminated items, such as petting, cuddling, hugging, kissing, licking, sharing sleeping areas, sharing food, contact with bedding materials or other contaminated cloth materials, or contact with bodily fluids. A [CDC study from the 2003 outbreak](#) provides more information on different types of exposures. To reduce the risk of transmission to and from animals, it is important for people with mpox to avoid close contact with animals, and for people to avoid close contact with animals that have mpox or have been exposed to mpox.

We are still learning which species of animals can get mpox. While we do not know if reptiles, amphibians, or birds can get mpox, it is unlikely since these animals have not been found to be infected with other orthopoxviruses, the family of viruses that includes mpox virus. Mammals seem to be the primary group of animals at risk for mpox.

Recommendations for people with mpox

Because of the risk of zoonotic spread (between people and animals), people with mpox should:

- Avoid close contact with mammals, including pets, domestic animals, and wildlife to prevent spreading the virus. Do not pet, cuddle, hug, kiss, or allow animals to lick you. Do not share sleeping areas or food with animals.
- If you did not have close contact with pets in the household after symptom onset, ask friends or family members who live in a separate home to be your animal's caretaker until you fully recover.
 - Disinfect your home before bringing healthy animals back; follow [isolation and infection control at home guidelines](#).
- If you had close contact with pets in the household after symptom onset, exposed pets should be kept at home and away from other animals. If possible, you should avoid close contact with the animal and ask another household member to care for them until fully recovered. Close contact with the animal should be limited for 21 days after the most

recent contact.

- People who are immunocompromised, pregnant, have young children present (<8 years of age), or with a history of atopic dermatitis or eczema have a higher risk of severe outcomes from mpox and should not provide care for animals that had close contact to a person with mpox.

If you must care for pets during home isolation, you should:

- Wash your hands, or use an alcohol-based hand rub, before and after caring for pets.
- Cover any skin rash as much as possible (i.e., long sleeves, long pants), and wear gloves and a well-fitting mask or respirator while providing care for animals.
- Do not let animals come into contact with rashes, bandages, or body fluids.
- Ensure pets cannot come into contact with contaminated articles in the home such as clothing, sheets, bandages, and towels.
- Ensure food, toys, bedding, or other items provided for animals during isolation do not come in direct contact with your skin or uncovered rash.

Do not surrender, euthanize, or abandon pets because of a potential exposure or infection. If you are unsure how to care for your pets during this time, contact your veterinarian or your [local health jurisdiction](#) (LHJ).

It is important to prevent pets' contact with wild rodents by [limiting rodents' access into the home](#) and supervising pets outdoors. If a person with mpox is unable to care for their animal, or if there is known ongoing contact with wild rodents due to an infestation or inability to keep the animal away from rodents, the animal should be temporarily removed from the home for a quarantine period of up to 21 days.

Animals exposed to mpox should be monitored for symptoms. Any symptoms should be reported to a veterinarian and your [local health jurisdiction](#) (LHJ). It is not clear what symptoms infected animals may have; watch them for potential signs of illness including lethargy, lack of appetite, cough, nasal secretions or crust, bloating, fever, and pimple or blister-like skin rash. An animal that had close contact with a person with mpox and new onset of symptoms following close contact should be evaluated by a veterinarian for testing.

Recommendations for veterinarians examining exposed and symptomatic animals

Veterinarians examining animals with suspected mpox should implement infection control practices, including hand hygiene and personal protective equipment (PPE). Proper PPE includes disposable gown, gloves, eye protection or face shield, and a NIOSH-approved particulate respirator equipped with N95 filters or higher.¹ CDC provides additional [guidance for veterinarians](#).

Animal Testing Guidance

Testing is recommended for symptomatic animals meeting the [CDC case definition for suspect animal cases of mpox](#). LHJs should work with the animal's veterinarian and Washington State Department of Health (DOH), specifically the Office of CD Epi Zoonotic Disease (206-418-5500), regarding specimen collection and submission to CDC and NVSL for testing. Approval from the state veterinarian is required and will be coordinated by DOH. CDC provides [guidance on animal sample collection and storage](#).

Animal Case Follow-up

Infected animals can potentially spread mpox to people or other animals. Animals with mpox should be separated from other animals and contact with people should be limited to interactions such as feeding and basic care for at least 21 days after becoming ill or until fully recovered. When caring for an animal with mpox, or suspected mpox, you should:

- Keep animals with signs of illness isolated in their home and away from anyone who has not had mpox.
- Follow precautions including diligent hand hygiene and using personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE should include gloves, eye protection (safety glasses, goggles, or face shield), and a well-fitting mask or respirator (ideally a disposable NIOSH-approved N95 filtering facepiece respirator), and a disposable gown.
 - If a disposable gown is not available, wear clothing that fully covers the skin (i.e. long sleeves, long pants), and immediately remove and [launder clothing](#) after contact with the animal, animal enclosures, or animal bedding.
 - Use a dedicated, lined trash can for all potentially contaminated waste. Seal any bags of waste and do not leave or dispose of outdoors. If appropriate for the species and the plumbing system, flush animal waste down the toilet.
- Bedding, enclosures, food dishes, and any other items in direct contact with infected animals must be properly disinfected. CDC provides [more information about cleaning and disinfection](#).

Resources

- [CDC mpox guidance for veterinarians, including animal case definition, guidance for examining animals with suspected mpox, guidance for testing animals for mpox.](#)
- [CDC MMWR article on the 2003 mpox outbreak](#)
- [CDC EID article on the 2003 mpox outbreak](#)
- [CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfection in community settings](#)
- [CDC guidance on preventing rodents from accessing homes](#)

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