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SEATTLE HUMANE TEMPORARILY CLOSING TO PUBLIC TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS TO REDUCE LARGE GROUP GATHERINGS

The nearly 200 shelter animals will continue to receive quality care; shelter veterinary officials assure there is no evidence pets can contract or spread Covid-19 infection.

For more information:

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Seattle Humane will be closing to the public starting Saturday, March 7. The independent not-for-profit shelter anticipates reopening on Sunday, March 15. This decision came out of an abundance of caution and in response to health officials' recommendation to reduce face-to-face contact to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

"Our commitment to providing comfort and care to vulnerable animals remains as strong as ever," said Interim Chief Executive Officer Paula Littlewood. "Be assured that the dogs, cats, and small critters entrusted to us will continue to receive the affection and attention they deserve."

The shelter had been proactively managing its intake to maintain a lower animal population in preparation for such a scenario, and as a result, it expects most — if not all — of the 75 pets currently in its care to be placed within its network of 900-plus foster volunteers. (The shelter already has 102 dogs and cats in foster care.) Any pet not able to be matched with a foster volunteer will continue to have their needs met by onsite animal care staff.

Services and activities that were scheduled to happen within the timeframe of this temporary public closure will be suspended and rescheduled for later dates. This includes public veterinary appointments, Humane Education events, media segments, Pet Resource Center appointments, and fundraising events. The Pet Food Bank will continue deliveries to its clients. Additionally, all staff and volunteers not required onsite for direct animal care and who would feel more comfortable working remotely will be encouraged to do so.

"We will continue to monitor and evaluate how best to respond this issue," Littlewood said. "Our goal is to protect our community of both people and pets from unnecessary exposure to large groups of people and to contribute to our region's efforts to slow transmission by reducing gatherings of large groups of people. We greatly appreciate the community's support as we work to ensure public safety and provide our staff and volunteers with the opportunity to focus on their own health and personal care."

This precautionary measure does not mean that the shelter's animals are in danger of either contracting or transmitting this infection.

Veterinary officials worldwide are in agreement that there is no evidence that dogs or cats can become ill from this strain or serve as a carrier of the infection.

"By being prepared and by continuing best practices for hand washing and prevention of spreading germs, pet owners can remain confident that scientific study after scientific study shows that, overall, pets are good for their owners' health," said Dr. Jessica Reed, veterinarian and Seattle Humane medical director. "For now, the best way you can protect your pets is by protecting yourself. As long as you're healthy, continue to snuggle your pets as usual."

While a dog in Hong Kong tested "weak positive" for the virus that causes Covid-19, officials say this solitary case is not cause for concern as the dog (whose owner is being treated for the infection) has not displayed any signs of illness. Additionally, the test result's implications remain unclear, said the American Veterinary Medical Association, as "it's unknown if the presence of the virus is due to infection, environmental contamination, cross-reactivity, or even potential issues with the test itself." The dog is quarantined, being monitored by health experts, and will be re-tested regularly.

"That case is singular and is not a reason to panic on your pet's behalf," Dr. Reed said. "Again, at this time, there is no evidence that pets are at risk of becoming sick from or spreading the infection."

While domesticated animals are not impacted by the coronavirus outbreak, this is a good opportunity to review your pets' role in your disaster preparedness plan. Both Seattle Humane veterinary staff and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that pet owners keep on hand the following: a two-week supply of food and water for each pet in your care, a two-week supply of each pet's medications, and a file that contains each pet's care plan, vaccination and ownership records, microchip information, and a preferred contact in case of emergency.

As this is a fluid situation, the shelter asks that the public monitor its website, www.seattlehumane.org, and their social media channels for regular updates, as the closure timeline is subject to change based on guidance received from local and national public health officials.

ABOUT [Seattle Humane](#)

Founded in 1897, Seattle Humane proudly promotes the human-animal bond by saving and serving pets in need. We provide adoption services 7 days a week, plus pet workshops and training, a pet food bank, a low-fee spay/neuter surgery program, humane teen club, a visiting pets program and more. Seattle Humane is located in Bellevue, at 13212 SE Eastgate Way. For directions and more information, visit www.seattlehumane.org or call (425) 641-0080.



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