



Colorado Veterinary
Medical Association

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Cat with H1N1 a reminder to pet owners to protect pets from flu too

A 13-year old cat in Iowa developed signs of a respiratory infection after several people in the household were ill. Preliminary testing was positive for 2009 H1N1 on October 29, and the results were confirmed on November 2. This is the first report of a cat infected with H1N1. The cat has recovered from its illness.

This is the first cat confirmed infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus. Two ferrets, one in Oregon and one in Nebraska, have also recently been confirmed infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus. The Nebraska ferret died, but the Oregon ferret has recovered.

To date, there is no evidence that the infected ferrets or cat passed the virus to people. The Colorado Veterinary Medical Association would like to remind pet owners that many viruses can pass between people and animals, so this was not an altogether unexpected event. We are advising pet owners to monitor their pets' health very closely, no matter what type of animal, and visit a veterinarian if there are any signs of illness.

This is not cause for panic or extreme measures. You are much more likely to catch the flu (any type of flu, including the 2009 H1N1 flu) from an infected person than you are from an animal. So far, all of the pets infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus became infected from being around their ill owners. The main lesson here is that if you're feeling ill and have flu-like symptoms, you should probably limit your contact with your pets until you are feeling better. As always, if your pet is showing signs of illness, it should be examined by a veterinarian.

Key Points for Pet Owners
Prevention

Standard techniques to prevent the spread of influenza are recommended. These include hand-washing and using alcohol-based hand cleaners, covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Try to avoid close contact with sick people and stay home from work or school if you are sick. If someone in your household has flu-like symptoms, try to avoid contact with other family members and pets.

Vaccines

A human vaccine is now available. Refer to the [CDC Web site](#) for the most current official information on human cases. There is no vaccine for domestic animals, such as ferrets, dogs, cats or birds.

Symptoms

If your pet starts to exhibit signs of a respiratory illness, lethargy, or conjunctivitis (swelling and redness of the membranes around the eyes), the animal should be examined by your veterinarian.

Treatment

As with people, treatment is supportive, which means treating the symptoms and letting the virus run its course. Once a diagnosis is made, your veterinarian may be able to suggest medications to make your pet more comfortable.

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The Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) exists to enhance animal health and welfare, promote the human-animal bond, protect public health, and foster excellence in veterinary medicine through education, advocacy and outreach.