

March 19, 2015 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Casey Barton Behravesh] Hi, I'm Dr. Casey Barton Behravesh.

[Heather Bair-Brake] And I'm Dr. Heather Bair-Brake.

[Casey Barton Behravesh] Dr. Bair-Brake and I are veterinarians here at CDC. We love pets and know how important they are in all of our lives.

[Heather Bair-Brake] There's been a lot of concern during the Ebola outbreak about whether animals, or specifically pets, are at risk of getting and spreading Ebola. Today we're talking about Ebola and pets.

[Casey Barton Behravesh] We're going to start with some basics about Ebola in animals.

Only a few kinds of animals have become infected with and been able to spread Ebola; these include fruit bats, monkeys, and apes.

Scientists believe that outbreaks of Ebola in people start when a person comes into contact with an infected animal. In Africa, outbreaks of Ebola have happened as a result of hunting and preparing infected wild animals for food.

There have never been any reports of dogs or cats getting sick with Ebola or being able to spread Ebola to people or animals. One study found that dogs *can* become infected with the virus, but there are no reports of dogs actually getting sick with Ebola. This is true even in areas of Africa where Ebola is common.

[Heather Bair-Brake] In the United States, the risk of an Ebola outbreak affecting many people is extremely low, and so is the risk that someone's dog or cat could be infected. To be at risk, a dog or cat would have to come into contact with blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola, which is very unlikely.

While dogs and cats are the most common pets, other unusual pets may be more at risk of becoming infected with Ebola *if* they were exposed to the virus. Monkeys, apes, and pigs, for instance, have a higher risk of being infected with and spreading the virus *if* exposed.

[Casey Barton Behravesh] Pigs are actually the *only* species of livestock that are currently known to be at risk for infection with *any* Ebola virus. Pigs in the Philippines and China have been found to be naturally infected with Reston virus, which is a type of Ebola virus that does not cause illness in humans.

However, pigs aren't known to be naturally infected with the type of Ebola virus that's causing the current outbreak. And there's no evidence that pigs can spread the Ebola virus to humans.

[Heather Bair-Brake] Luckily, there's also no evidence that Ebola can infect other animals, like birds, reptiles, amphibians, or fish. Millions of people have pets in their home and many are worried about what could happen to pets that had contact with a person with Ebola, or pets of people being monitored for Ebola after traveling to West Africa.

[Casey Barton Behravesh] It's definitely a concern because we love our pets. That's why CDC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the American Veterinary Medical Association worked together to create guidance on pets owned by people being monitored for Ebola after returning from countries with Ebola outbreaks.

People who are under *active* monitoring for Ebola don't need to limit their contact with pets unless they become sick. People under active monitoring are those that check their temperature twice a day and watch for other symptoms of Ebola, and report it to their health department. Then there's *direct* active monitoring, which means that a public health worker directly observes the person once a day to check for fever or other symptoms.

People under *direct* active monitoring should avoid contact with dogs, cats, livestock, and other mammals just to be safe. Ideally, pets should be moved out of the house and receive care elsewhere until their owner's 21-day monitoring period is over. If the pet is not moved out during this period, it might need to be quarantined.

[Heather Bair-Brake] The bottom line is, here in the U.S., it's *extremely* unlikely that a pet would be at risk of getting Ebola. Pet owners are much more likely to see something like *Salmonella* or ringworm in the U.S. than Ebola.

We want everyone— people *and* their pets—to stay safe and healthy.

So, learn as much as you can about your pet's needs, schedule regular appointments with your veterinarian, learn about the different diseases your pets can spread, and always wash your hands after playing with your pets so they don't pass germs to you. Keeping your pets healthy is a great way to keep you and your family healthy, too!

If you'd like more information, visit cdc.gov/healthypets.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.