



H1N1 Virus

Here are some facts about the H1N1 virus and animals. For updated information, please visit the OVMA Web site at oregonvma.org/news/h1n1.

Prevention

Standard techniques to prevent the spread of influenza to your pets or other humans 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 your pet exhibits symptoms of a respiratory illness and members of your household have been ill with symptoms consistent with influenza, consult with your veterinarian.



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Cats

Two Oregon cats have tested positive for the H1N1 virus. Both died from severe pneumonia. Nationally, at least five other cats have tested positive. Those cats have recovered. Despite the unfortunate outcome in the Oregon cases, the number of confirmed cases of H1N1 infection in cats is quite small compared to the US cat population, estimated at 81 million.

Transmission: It is believed that the virus was transmitted from the human owners to their cats. Coughing and sneezing can spread the virus which can remain infectious for about a week outside the body. Thoroughly wash your hands when handling sick pets or when you are sick.

Symptoms: Watch for symptoms and seek veterinary care for cats that show signs of respiratory illness when there has also been recent influenza-like illness in humans in the same household and especially if your cat has chronic upper respiratory disease. Symptoms include coughing, sneezing, lethargy, or conjunctivitis (swelling and redness of the membranes around the eyes).

Treatment: As with people, treatment is supportive, which means treating the symptoms and letting the virus run its course.

Dogs

A 13-year old dog in New York became ill after its owner had a confirmed case of 2009 H1N1 influenza. The dog was treated for pneumonia and is currently recovering.

Transmission: It is believed that the virus was transmitted from the human owner to the dog.

Symptoms: If your dog is lethargic, coughing, not eating, and has a fever, especially when there has been influenza-like illness in the same household, seek veterinary care.

Treatment: As with people, treatment is supportive, which means treating the symptoms and letting the virus run its course.

Ferrets

Five Oregon ferrets have tested positive for the H1N1 virus. Ferrets are generally susceptible to influenza A viruses under which H1N1 is classified. All Oregon ferrets have recovered. A ferret in Nebraska died.

Transmission: It is believed that the virus was transmitted from the human owners to their ferrets. Coughing and sneezing can spread the virus which can remain infectious for about a week outside the body. Thoroughly wash your hands when handling sick pets or when you are sick.

Symptoms: Seek veterinary care if your ferret starts to exhibit signs of a respiratory illness or lethargy. Bacterial infection may be of concern.

Treatment: As with people, treatment is supportive, which means treating the symptoms and letting the virus run its course. You must ensure that your ferret remains hydrated. Treatment with fluids and/or force feeding may be necessary.

Birds & Poultry

The virus has been found in turkey flocks. Consumers are reminded that they cannot catch the influenza virus from eating turkey. Backyard poultry could potentially be at risk of H1N1 transmission from humans.

Pet Birds

Pet birds can also be susceptible to H1N1. Testing is recommended if the bird and owner both develop an influenza-like illness compatible with H1N1.

Swine & Pet Pigs

While swine have tested positive for the virus, consumers are reminded that they cannot catch the influenza virus from eating pork. Because swine are susceptible to this virus, follow standard flu prevention protocols when handling your pet pig.