**COVID-19 TRANSPORT PROTOCOL**

This COVID-19 Transport Protocol was developed by the Maine Federation of Humane Societies, in consultation with the State of Maine Animal Welfare Program and reviewed by national animal welfare organizations with input from the University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine Program. This protocol is intended to be a best practices resource for licensed Maine shelters and rescue groups engaging in the importation of homeless animals from out of state during the COVID-19 pandemic and can be tailored to fit the specific needs of each organization.

As with any transport, this protocol recognizes the varying level of resources available for shelters and rescue groups across the country and there is a set of standards that must be met in order to responsibly and effectively conduct and/or participate in a transport program. The overarching principles for safeguarding animals during transport include maintenance of health, avoidance of exposure to potential pathogens, prevention of escape, prevention of injury, and reduction of stressors such as temperature extremes, aversive odors, excessive noises, and confrontations with other animals. Appropriate animal transport must also minimize risks to animal care and transport personnel. In addition, when animals must be transported through public areas, the safety of the general public must be considered. Transport personnel must comply with the following guidelines.

**PRIOR TO ARRIVAL (AT SENDING SHELTER/RESCUE):**

All homeless animals originating outside of Maine must meet the State of Maine importation requirements stipulated by law. In addition to those stipulations, **shelters and rescue groups sending pets who have been housed in foster homes must use the following questionnaire for each foster pet prior to transport:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Have you or any members of your household felt sick in the last 14 days?
 | YES | NO |
| **CDC Symptoms can be found at**<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>**If you answered yes above, please circle any symptoms below that apply (excluding seasonal allergies):** Headache • Fever • Runny Nose • Sore Throat • Sinus Congestion • Cough • Difficulty Breathing • Loss of Smell |
| 1. Have you or any members of your household had contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
 | YES | NO |
| Has the pet(s) that you are transporting today shown any of the following symptoms within the past 14 days (circle all that apply)?Cough • Nasal Discharge • Eye Discharge • Difficulty Breathing • Loss of Appetite • Lethargy |
| **PLEASE NOTE:*** **If the answer is yes to any of the above, the pet may not be transported.**
* **Transport drivers and volunteers also must be asked and answer no to items 1 and 2.**
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**DURING TRANSPORT:**

* Drivers will wear masks and disposable gloves when they exit the vehicle. Proper and frequent handwashing for refueling, restroom breaks, food stops are required. If handwashing is not an option, the use of hand sanitizer is acceptable.
* Drivers will minimize stops and embark on routes that avoid known hotspots and major metropolitan areas. Transporters are advised to check using the John Hopkins COVID-19 map before embarking on a transport to determine the safest travel route - <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>.
* Once the transport is underway, drivers will continue to check for coronavirus hotspots upon entering each state by using the John Hopkins COVID-19 map to pinpoint areas that should be avoided - <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>.
* Following is some state specific information for the Northeast, but recognizing the evolving nature of COVID-19’s impact across geographic areas these sections should be updated as needed.
* NEW YORK. No routine stops will be allowed in New York – emergency stops are approved for the following counties: Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chenango, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Putnam, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schuyler, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Sullivan, Tompkins, Ulster, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates. Information regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases in New York can be found at <https://covid19tracker.health.ny.gov/>.
* CONNECTICUT. Hot spots include Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, New Haven, Danbury, Watertown, Hartford. Information regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases in Connecticut can be found at <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>.
* MASSACHUSETTS. Hot spots are Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Revere, Springfield, Worcester. Information regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting>.
* Drivers will maintain 6 ft. physical distancing from all those besides co-drivers as well as keep time spent in proximity to others to a minimum even when physical distancing is observed.
* Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used to prevent cross-contamination among animals and between humans and animals (e.g. pathogenic organisms and other biological materials, chemicals, fomites, etc.).
* Release of animal dander, airborne animal allergens and animal bedding into the environment must be minimized. Transporters should ensure that filter tops or other effective covers are used on rodent cages and cages or carriers are covered during transport.
* Empty, soiled cages or carriers should be covered during transport.
* During animal rest stops, transporters should avoid public areas as much as possible, using less populated and more remote areas to remove pets. Transporters must adhere to strict physical distancing and not allow members of the general public to engage with (petting or touching) any transported animal during the rest stop period.

**UPON ARRIVAL:**

* Preferred locations for transporters to meet receiving organizations include licensed “brick and mortar” shelter facilities, physical address of record listed on the receiving organization’s importation permit, or other private property where the receiving organization has an agreement with the landowner. Public locations such as retail parking lots, truck stops, and rest areas are discouraged and should be avoided.
* Drivers must wear masks and should remain in/on the vehicle for the duration of the removal and transfer of animals to the receiving organization. Drivers will be allowed to use facilities following proper direction and guidance from the receiving organization once the animals are safely removed and secured within a designated area.
* Receiving organizations will follow their protocol/SOP for acceptance of animals from out of state. Each receiving organization will pay special attention to PPE and utilize it in accordance with its PPE supply. PPE includes disposable or washable gowns or coveralls, gloves, face covering, shoe covers, etc. Receiving organizations will also adhere to physical distancing guidelines and the wiping down doorknobs or any common areas where animal receiving is designated.
* Receiving organizations will attach a slip lead to dogs.
* Receiving organizations will take cats to a secure, contained area to be removed from the sending organization’s carriers and placed in the receiving organization’s carriers. The sending organization’s carriers will be cleaned and sprayed with disinfectant prior to reloading on vehicle. The crate transfer area will be sprayed with a disinfectant shown to kill the COVID-19 virus.
* Any animals exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms, lethargy or fever upon arrival must be immediately quarantined and a veterinarian consulted. Notification must also be sent to the organization’s veterinarian of reference and the state veterinarian.
* A list of the clinical signs associated with COVID-19 in animals can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/veterinarians.html#clinical-signs-animals>.
* Enclosures must be appropriately cleaned and sanitized with a disinfectant shown to kill the COVID-19 virus and to prevent the spread of pathogenic organisms, animal allergens, and animal wastes.
* Animal cargo areas should be clean and decontaminated with a disinfectant shown to kill the COVID-19 virus as needed to protect the health of humans and other animals.
* Some examples of disinfectant that have been shown to kill the COVID-19 virus include but are not limited to Accel, Rescue, and Kennesol. A list of such disinfectants can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.

**QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS PER MAINE STATE LAW:**

* Puppies and kittens under 6-months of age are quarantined for 5 days, per Maine state law - <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ahw/animal_welfare/forms.shtml#import>.
* Dogs and cats 6-months and older are quarantined for 2 days, per Maine state law - <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ahw/animal_welfare/forms.shtml#import>.

**CLEANING PROTOCOLS FOR QUARANTINE AREAS:**

Follow normal kennel cleaning protocols in addition to the guidelines below:

* Washable/disposable gowns, coveralls, gloves and shoe covers must be worn when cleaning or handling the transport dogs.
	+ Washable/disposable gowns, coveralls, gloves and shoe covers will be changed in between each kennel.
* Washable/disposable gowns and gloves must be worn when cleaning or handling transport cats.
* Make notes on each animal’s observation sheet about feeding, drinking, bowel habits, and general health.
* As always, feces must be scooped in between each dog, before the next dog goes out. In addition, with transport dogs, spray accelerated hydrogen peroxide product on the spot where the feces were picked up.
* If volunteers are helping with the transport dogs they cannot volunteer or visit the general dog population after the transport process is complete. This is to reduce the risk of cross contamination. If they are working with other dogs, it must be done before transports dogs arrive at the shelter.

**AIRLINE PROTOCOL FOR TRANSPORT FLIGHTS:**

* All animals must be crated with proper paperwork firmly secured to the top of each crate before entering the airport’s grounds.
* Do not crate or add paperwork on the tarmac.
* Ensure that all crates have water cups attached before bringing the dogs to the tarmac.
* Each participating organization must ensure that any personnel with any symptoms of respiratory disease (sore throat, cough, fever) or living with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 stays home. See CDC guidelines for symptoms at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.
* If someone develops symptoms on the way to the airport, they must remain in the vehicle throughout the loading or unloading.
* Each participating organization should limit the number of personnel to those essential for the loading or unloading of animals.
* All participating organizations’ personnel must use proper physical distancing (6 ft. distance) between people. Do not congregate together, no hugs, and no handshakes.
* All participating organizations’ personnel will remain at or near their vehicles on the tarmac except when needed for the loading or unloading of animals in order to reduce social gathering and maintain physical distancing.
* All participating organizations’ personnel present on the tarmac must wear PPE including disposable or washable gowns or coveralls, gloves, and face coverings.
* Each receiving organization should touch only their own crates. Do not move crates that belong to another receiving organization. Should someone touch another receiving organization’s crates, they must change their gloves before touching other crates.
* After all crates have been loaded or unloaded, discard disposable gowns and gloves in the trash, wash your hands with soap and water, or apply hand sanitizer if handwashing is not available. Place washable gowns and/or coveralls in a plastic bag for laundering.

**MEDIA PROTOCOL:**

* Personnel should refrain from taking/sharing images/video of transports unless requested by a manager/director.
* Press coverage of transports during COVID-19 should be managed/directed to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s absence, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should be notified.
	+ Communication/interviews regarding transports/\_\_\_\_\_\_ /COVID-19 should be handled only by those individuals identified above.