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Suggested Talking Points for Government PIOs on COVID 19 and Companion Animals

Reassure people with pets that, as far as we know, their dogs and cats are safe and can serve as a source of comfort during a crisis.

Message 1: Multiple health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization and the American Veterinary Medical Association have stated that pets and domestic animals are not at risk for contracting COVID-19. The CDC states that there's no evidence at this time that pets or other animals can become sick with COVID-19. However, it is still recommended that people with COVID-19 limit contact with people and animals until more information is known about the virus.

More on that if time allows

- It's beneficial to have pets in your house as they can serve as a source of comfort, but try to avoid snuggling, kissing and sharing of food if you test positive for COVID-19. If you're in contact with your pet, wash our hands before and after you interact with them and wear a facemask.
- The companionship of pets has been shown to reduce stress and lower anxiety, helping people to feel calmer and more secure when the news from the outside world is distressing.

Message 2: If you don't have a pet and are thinking about getting one, now is the perfect time to "try it on" by fostering from your local shelter.

- Animal shelters are bracing themselves for the possibility of increased intake, fewer adoptions and fewer foster homes, and the possibility of no space.
- Individuals can reduce the impact on local shelters by reaching out to foster or donate to support the animals in their community.

Message 3: People with pets should be prepared with enough food, water and medications for your pet, in case of lockdown or self-quarantine.

- Have on hand at least a one-month supply of your pets' medications, litter, and food.
- Make sure your pets' vaccination records are current and you have copies.
- Consider the care of your pets as you put together your household readiness plan

Message 4: Rely on trusted and up-to-date sources for the latest information and recommendations. Stay off social media. And pet your dog or cat.