**For immediate release:** October 19, 2021 **MDARD Media Contact:**Jennifer Holton**,** 517-284-5724 **MDHHS Media Contact:** Chelsea Wuth**,** 517-241-2112

# MDARD encouraging pet owners take precautions after State’s first case of SARS-CoV-2 identified in a cat

There is no evidence suggesting animals are playing a role in transmission to humans

LANSING—Today, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) confirmed SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 in humans) in a domestic shorthair cat from Ingham County. While a number of pets have tested positive for the virus worldwide, this is the first case in Michigan.

The cat had close contact with its owners, who were confirmed to have COVID-19 about a week before the cat became ill. The cat was tested after it began to sneeze and has since recovered.

“Given the other reported cases of SARS-CoV-2 being found in pets throughout the world, this detection is not unexpected,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Nora Wineland. “The cases in animals generally have involved direct contact with an owner or caretaker who was ill or tested positive for COVID-19.”

As of October 18, 2021, there have been 257 confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 in animals throughout the United States, including 99 cats, since the start of the pandemic. There is no evidence to suggesting animals are playing a significant role in the transmission of the virus to humans and that the possibility is very low.

“COVID-19 mainly spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, and talking,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MDHHS chief medical executive. “Protecting pets begins by taking precautions to protect yourself by getting one of the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines.”

An additional step to protect your pets from the virus that causes COVID-19 includes people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 avoiding direct contact with animals—including kissing them, snuggling them, having them sleep in an ill person’s bed, and sharing food with an ill person. If possible, another member of the household who is not sick should care for pets. If people with COVID-19 must care for a pet, wearing a mask as well as wash their hands before and after interacting with them.

Signs of SARS-CoV-2 in animals can include fever, sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, eye discharge, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. If you think your pet is sick with the virus or if you have concerns about your pet’s health, please contact your veterinarian. Testing is recommended in some circumstances, including for animals with recent exposure to a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. A veterinarian will need to obtain approval to test animals for SARS-CoV-2 from MDARD by calling 800-292-3939.

For more recommendations and information, please visit the Center for Disease Control’s [Animals and COVID-19](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flnks.gd%2Fl%2FeyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTEwMTkuNDc1NjcwMTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZGMuZ292L2Nvcm9uYXZpcnVzLzIwMTktbmNvdi9kYWlseS1saWZlLWNvcGluZy9hbmltYWxzLmh0bWw_Q0RDX0FBX3JlZlZhbD1odHRwcyUzQSUyRiUyRnd3dy5jZGMuZ292JTJGY29yb25hdmlydXMlMkYyMDE5LW5jb3YlMkZhbmltYWxzJTJGcGV0cy1vdGhlci1hbmltYWxzLmh0bWwifQ.32xaOGU-c63HNK-aachNa3veT0JZjaO9gDHU00gc3c0%2Fs%2F1234248737%2Fbr%2F114241916022-l&data=04%7C01%7CGabrielle.Grant%40detroitmi.gov%7C8a930eb7e0f747c73fc708d993ff003b%7Ce154a7601d2d4ef68fd3ebc8b4ef31fd%7C0%7C0%7C637703545686019728%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Gw1weffBtYQAmC6biq%2BuT6fpW5Sn2eyOAc8QjOEHAX0%3D&reserved=0) and the United States Department of Agriculture’s [SARS-CoV-2 in Animals in the United States](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flnks.gd%2Fl%2FeyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTEwMTkuNDc1NjcwMTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5hcGhpcy51c2RhLmdvdi9hcGhpcy9vdXJmb2N1cy9hbmltYWxoZWFsdGgvc2Ffb25lX2hlYWx0aC9zYXJzLWNvdi0yLWFuaW1hbHMtdXMifQ.Z0uZvSuGqP1Ct5EG80kpifzF_dSY8fTvF76lVKEYkp8%2Fs%2F1234248737%2Fbr%2F114241916022-l&data=04%7C01%7CGabrielle.Grant%40detroitmi.gov%7C8a930eb7e0f747c73fc708d993ff003b%7Ce154a7601d2d4ef68fd3ebc8b4ef31fd%7C0%7C0%7C637703545686029685%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=reD6X8gYVvORIBaDOyAqrfsq25oRh7T0iTrXogkOSXU%3D&reserved=0) websites.

Dr. Wineland headshot for use

###