

Ten tips for a healthier indoor environment

When's the right time to prepare for an outbreak? You could wait until you have outbreak conditions, or you can be proactive by taking steps to create as healthy an environment as possible. Use these tips to help you ward off infectious diseases.

1. Review Protocols & SOP's

Make sure your cleaning/disinfecting protocols are up to date. Verify all chemistries are documented with correct dilution ratios, dwell times, PPE & current SDS. Allow your protocols to expand & contract based on the current circumstances such as the time of year, reports of increased illnesses in the area, high risk pets, etc.

2. Staff Training

Have every staff member undergo detailed training on current protocols & SOP's including effective cleaning techniques & equipment maintenance. Perform monthly safety meetings that include biosecurity measures. Encourage ownership of best practices.

3. Empower your Staff

Encourage your staff to be observant & take prompt action if a pet presents any symptoms no matter how subtle. Verify they know the SOPs for proper transport, isolation, reporting and documentation.

4. Get Organized & Loose the Clutter

Reservoirs for pathogen can be anywhere where moisture &/or organic material accumulates. Minimize risks by getting things up off the floor, fill in cracks and keep corners, grout lines, tracks & crevices clean. Install hangers for cleaning equipment and avoid cross contamination by color coding to verify the equipment stays in its designated area. Create logs and checklists to monitor accountability.

5. Minimize Stress Levels

Increased stress levels lower immune systems. Keep high anxiety pets in quieter areas. Use noise abatement products, background music, sounds or white noise. Minimize pets' exposure to chemical smells & residues. Remember smells are more concentrated at ground level and a dog's sense of smell is 40x that of a human.

6. Eliminate High-Risk Practices

Sweeping, mopping & power washing are all considered high risk for aerosolizing pathogens. Avoid putting any surface under pressure which would displace germs and organic material. Replace with better options such as wet vacuuming, spray/scrub/squeegee method, single use mop heads/cleaning cloths, etc.

7. Perform Routine Maintenance on all Cleaning & Application Equipment

Clean all equipment after each use. Check for worn or broken parts and replace as needed. Flush applicators & lubricate if indicated. Store all equipment off the ground on hangers or in designated cabinets.

8. Routinely Check Metered Equipment for Accurate Dilutions.

Have staff document the date, test results, any maintenance performed and their initials for each unit in service.

9. Address Indoor Air Quality

Have both passive & active systems in place to mitigate airborne pathogens. Perform routine maintenance on HVAC system by changing out the filters regularly and having the ductwork (including the dryer vent) professionally cleaned annually. Verify the correct size & type of filters are being used. Check your humidity levels and try to maintain a level between 30-60%. Address the root cause for any odor issues present.

10. Don't Forget the Drains

It is critical to routinely clear accumulation of organic materials including fecal residue, body oils and hair or fur from the drains and drain covers. But be careful not to aerosolize the material or to 'mix' incompatible chemicals in the pipes which could cause toxic off gassing.