

WSAVA Scientific and One Health Committees

ADVISORY DOCUMENT: UPDATED AS OF MARCH 20, 2020

The New Coronavirus and Companion Animals - Advice for WSAVA Members

An outbreak of pneumonia in people in China has been drawing worldwide concern about a new coronavirus (termed SARS-Cov-2) as a global public health risk. The new coronavirus was identified after notification of pneumonia cases of unknown cause in December 2019, diagnosed initially in the Chinese city of Wuhan, capital of Hubei province. Thousands of cases have already been detected in China, and the disease has been exported by travelers to many other countries. Initially, there was no clear evidence for person-to-person transmission. In the last few weeks, however, person-to-person spread of the SARS-Cov-2 via respiratory droplets has been confirmed.

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) temporarily named the new virus as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). However, on February 11th it was definitively named SARS-Cov-2 and the disease caused by this virus was named 'Coronavirus Disease 2019' (abbreviated "COVID-19"). While more cases of the disease are being reported on a daily basis in China and elsewhere, the exact source of the outbreak is still not known. Currently, there is no evidence suggesting a specific animal host as a virus reservoir, and further investigations are ongoing.

Coronaviruses belong to the family Coronaviridae. Alpha- and beta-coronaviruses usually infect mammals, while gamma and delta coronaviruses usually infect birds and fish. Canine coronavirus, which can cause mild diarrhea and feline coronavirus, which can cause feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), are both alpha-coronaviruses. These coronaviruses are not associated with the current coronavirus outbreak. Until the appearance of SARS-Cov-2, which belongs to the beta-coronaviruses, there were only six known coronaviruses capable of infecting humans and causing respiratory disease, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus SARS-CoV (identified in 2002/2003) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus MERS-CoV (identified in 2012). SARS-Cov-2 is genetically more related to SARS-CoV than MERS-CoV, but both are beta-coronaviruses with their origins in bats. While it is not known whether COVID-19 will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses can inform recommendations concerning COVID-19.

In the last few weeks, rapid progress has been made in the identification of viral etiology, isolation of infectious virus and the development of diagnostic tools. However, there are still many important questions that remain to be answered.

The most up-to-date information and advice on human infection can be found on the following websites:

- World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/about/index.html)

The most up-to-date information related to animal health can be found on the following website:

WSAVA Secretariat Office

72 Melville Street
Dundas, Ontario
Canada L9H 2A1
Tel: +905.627.8540
Fax: +905.627.8425
Email: wsavasecretariat@gmail.com





- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/

In response to this outbreak, the WSAVA Scientific and One Health Committees have prepared the following list of frequently asked questions for the WSAVA membership in collaboration with One Health interested individuals around the globe. We are aware of issues related to pet abandonment in China and hope that this information will be of use to veterinarians around the world in dealing with the concerns of their clients.

How can I help protect myself and my clinic staff?

Visit the COVID-19 Prevention and Treatment page to learn about how to protect yourself from respiratory illnesses, like COVID-19 (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html)

Can SARS-CoV2 infect pets?

Currently there is limited evidence that companion animals can be infected with SARS-Cov-2 and no evidence that pet dogs or cats can be a source of infection to other animals or to humans resulting in COVID-19. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick with COVID-19?

The CDC recommends the following: “You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is recommended that people who are sick with COVID-19 try to limit the amount of contact they have with their pets. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, limit the amount of direct contact as much as possible, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you need to care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, ensure you continue to maintain good hygiene practices, such as washing hands before and after interacting with pets and wear a facemask.”

Please check for new updates on the CDC’s website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#2019-nCoV-and-animals

If my pet has been in contact with someone who is sick from COVID-19, can it spread the virus to other people?

While we do not yet know for sure, there is limited evidence that companion animals can be infected with or spread SARS-Cov-2. We also do not know if they could get sick from this new coronavirus. Additionally, there is currently no evidence that companion animals could be a source of infection to people. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.



What should I do if my pet develops an unexplained illness and was around a person with documented SARS-Cov-2 infection?

We don't yet know if companion animals can get infected by SARS-Cov-2 or sick with COVID-19. If your pet develops an unexplained illness and has been exposed to a person with COVID-19, talk to the public health official working with the person with COVID-19. If your area has a public health veterinarian, the public health official will consult with them or another appropriate official. If the state public health veterinarian, or other public health official, advises you to take your pet to a veterinary clinic, call your veterinary clinic before you go to let them know that you are bringing a sick pet that has been exposed to a person with COVID-19. This will allow the clinic time to prepare an isolation area. Do not take the animal to a veterinary clinic unless you are instructed to do so by a public health official.

What are the concerns regarding pets that have been in contact with people infected with this virus?

While SARS-Cov-2 seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses. Importantly, there is limited evidence that companion animals including pets such as dogs and cats, can become infected with SARS-Cov-2.

Although there is no evidence that pets play a role in the epidemiology of COVID-19, strict hand hygiene should be maintained by the entire clinical team throughout the veterinary interaction, especially if dealing with an animal that has been in contact with an infected person.

What should be done with pets in areas where the virus is active?

Currently there is limited evidence that pets can be infected with SARS-Cov-2. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, until we know more, pet owners should avoid contact with animals they are unfamiliar with and always wash their hands before and after they interact with animals. If owners are sick with COVID-19, they should try to limit the amount of direct contact with animals in their household, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If they need to care for their pet or be around animals while they are sick, they should wash their hands before and after they interact with them and wear a facemask.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Should veterinarians start to vaccinate dogs against canine coronavirus because of the risk of SARS-Cov-2?

The canine coronavirus vaccines available in some global markets are intended to protect against enteric coronavirus infection and are NOT licensed for protection against respiratory infections. Veterinarians should NOT use such vaccines in the face of the current outbreak thinking that there may be some form of cross-protection against SARS-Cov-2. There is **absolutely no evidence** that vaccinating dogs with commercially available vaccines will provide cross-protection against infection by COVID-19, since the enteric and respiratory viruses are distinctly different variants of coronavirus. No vaccines are currently available in any market for respiratory coronavirus infection in the dog. [Information from the WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group].



WSAVA
Global Veterinary Community

Note: WSAVA recognizes that not all recommendations will apply to all areas or all regions at all times, depending on the epidemiological risk and risk mitigation in the area. WSAVA encourages veterinarians to keep in close contact with, and follow the directions of, their local veterinary authority.

WSAVA Secretariat Office

72 Melville Street
Dundas, Ontario
Canada L9H 2A1
Tel: +905.627.8540
Fax: +905.627.8425
Email: wsavasecretariat@gmail.com

