

WSAVA Scientific and One Health Committees

ADVISORY DOCUMENT

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 2019-nCoV) 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 2019-nCoV has been confirmed, as shown by new cases of viral pneumonia among family members and health care providers through close contact.

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) temporarily named the new virus as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). While more cases are being reported on a daily basis in China and elsewhere, the exact source of the outbreak is still not known, but the origin is believed to be linked to the Huanan South China Seafood Market, a seafood and live animal 'wet market' in Wuhan. 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. Until the appearance of 2019-nCoV, which belong 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). 2019-nCoV is more genetically related to SARS than MERS, but both are beta-coronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we don't know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, we can use the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us.

In the last few weeks, rapid progresses have 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 WHO (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>) and the CDC websites (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/about/index.html>) The most up-to-date information related to animal health is available at <https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-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 with the help of Prof. Scott Weese from the University of Guelph, Canada. We are aware of issues related to pet abandonment in China and hope that this information will be of use to veterinarians in dealing with the concerns of their clients.

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How can I help protect myself and my clinic staff?

Visit the [2019-nCoV Prevention and Treatment](#) page to learn about how to protect yourself from respiratory illnesses, like 2019-nCoV.

Can 2019-nCoV infect domestic animals?

Currently there is no evidence that pets or other domestic animals can be infected with this new coronavirus. Additionally, there is currently no evidence that pets or other domestic animals might be a source of infection to people with the new coronavirus. 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?

Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with 2019-nCoV, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet in order to protect the pet from the possibility of disease transmission.

What should I do if my pet or other animal becomes ill and was around a person with novel coronavirus?

If your pet or other animal becomes ill, call your veterinarian to let them know that you are bringing a sick pet that was exposed to a person with the new coronavirus. Do not take the animal to a veterinary clinic until you have had a discussion with clinic staff. Tell them about any contact the animal may have had with someone with 2019-nCoV infection.

If my pet or other animal has been in contact with someone who is sick, can they spread the disease to other people?

We do not yet know if animals can get infected. We also do not know if they could get sick from this new coronavirus. Currently there is no evidence that pets or other domestic animals can be infected with this new coronavirus. Additionally, there is currently no evidence that pets or other domestic animals might be a source of infection to people with the new coronavirus. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

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

While this virus 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 no data to date that dogs and cats can become infected with 2019-nCoV

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

Currently there is no evidence that pets or other domestic animals can be infected with this new coronavirus. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes



available. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with 2019-nCoV, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet. However, people diagnosed with 2019-nCoV should stay away from pets to help protect the pet from the potential for disease spread.

Should veterinarians start to vaccinate dogs against canine coronavirus because of the risk of 2019-nCoV?

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 2019-nCoV. There is **absolutely no evidence** that vaccinating dogs with the commercial available vaccines will provide cross-protection against the infection by the 2019-nCoV, 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].

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