

2ND CALL OF OIE INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP ON HUMAN COVID-19 AND ANIMALS

2ND MARCH 2020

Agenda

1. Significance of positive canine sample in Hong Kong
 - a. Update - Malik Peiris
 - b. Risk communication messages/guidance re human COVID-19 cases and animals
 - c. Companion animal surveillance around human cases of COVID-19

2. Update on investigations
 - a. WHO mission – Peter Ben Embarek
 - b. Diagnostics for animals
 - c. Animal source
 - i. Reservoir
 - ii. Intermediate hosts
 - iii. Incidental hosts
 - d. Host range (lab studies) studies

3. AOB

Agreed messages

What do we know about COVID-19 virus and companion animals?

The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human to human transmission. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals can spread the disease. Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals which may compromise their welfare.

The National Veterinary Services of Hong Kong reported to OIE evidence that a dog had tested positive to the COVID-19 virus following close exposure to its owners who were sick with COVID-19. The test, conducted by real time PCR, showed the presence of genetic material from the COVID-19 virus. The dog was not showing any clinical signs of the disease.

Currently, there is no evidence that dogs play a role in the spread of this human disease or that they become sick. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19 virus. The OIE will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

There is no evidence to support restrictions to movement or trade of companion animals.

What precautionary measures should be taken by owners when companion or other animals have close contact with humans sick or suspected with COVID-19?

There have not been any reports of companion or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19 and currently there is no evidence that they play a significant epidemiological role in this human disease. However, because animals and people can sometimes share diseases (known as zoonotic diseases), it is

still recommended that people who are sick with COVID-19 limit contact with companion and other animals until more information is known about the virus.

When handling and caring for animals, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented. This includes hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing, licking or sharing food.

When possible, people who are sick or under medical attention for COVID-19 should avoid close contact with their pets and have another member of their household care for their animals. If they must look after their pet, they should maintain good hygiene practices and wear a face mask if possible.

What can National Veterinary Services do?

Public Health and Veterinary Services should work together using a One Health approach to share information and conduct a risk assessment when a person with COVID-19 reports being in contact with companion or other animals.

If a decision is made as a result of a risk assessment to test a companion animal which has had close contact with a person/owner infected with COVID-19, it is recommended that RT-PCR be used to test oral, nasal and fecal/rectal samples.

While there is no evidence of a COVID-19 infection spreading from one animal to another, keeping animals that test positive for COVID-19 away from unexposed animals should be considered best practice.