

Pet Owners and Policy Makers Should Exhibit Restraint and Care In Dealing with Cases of Coronavirus in Pets

First Case of COVID-19 in a Pet Transmission Suspected from Infected Person to Dog, But the Animal is Asymptomatic

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, March 6, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Policy makers should act with restraint and with a common-sense, science-based approach in dealing with cases where pets contract COVID-19, according to veterinarians and other experts from the Animal Wellness Foundation. The first case of COVID-19 with suspected transmission from an infected person to their dog has been confirmed in Hong Kong. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) received a medical report on March 1st from the chief veterinarian from the Hong Kong Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation revealing the first documented case of COVID-19 in a pet. The pathway was from a person to a dog, and not the converse. [You can read the report here.](#)



Photo credit: Jennifer Skiff

“The dog (was) kept in the same household as a confirmed COVID-19 patient,” according to the report, and did not exhibit clinical signs of being sick. Authorities ordered the dog quarantined after the owner was hospitalized with a COVID-19 infection. The American Veterinary Medical Association reported that public health authorities in Hong Kong tested the dog twice over a two-day period and the test results indicated a “weak positive” for SARS-COV-2. The dog, while testing positive, has shown no signs of illness.

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Keep your distance and be diligent in following sanitary recommendations.”

Jennifer Skiff, Animal Wellness Foundation

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is no evidence that companion animals can spread COVID-19.

The converse is true, but the effects on the animals are not expected to be severe.

“We now know that people can transmit the Coronavirus to their pets. If you’re sick, you should protect your pets like you would any other family member. Keep your distance and be diligent in following sanitary recommendations,” said Jennifer Skiff, director of International Programs for

the Animal Wellness Foundation. “Pet owners should take precautions to protect their pets, but they absolutely should not relinquish their animals or deny them usual standard of care,” she added.

“People should not fret about contracting the virus from our pets,” says Dr. Sarah LaMere, a veterinary virologist and a member of the National Veterinary Council of the Animal Wellness Foundation. “We face much greater risks of contracting the virus from people.

Dr. LaMere added that pets contract the virus the same way that humans do – from contact with infected droplets from a person or infected surfaces. “If you or someone in your household is infected with COVID-19,” said Dr. LaMere, “it makes sense to isolate the pet from that person to an extent practicable. But the virus, even if it passes to a pet, is unlikely to make your pets sick and deliver symptoms that will affect the animal’s quality of life.”

“I want to impress upon people that there isn’t any evidence right now that COVID-19 is going to be a concern in animals, even though a dog tested positive,” observed Dr. LaMere. She recommends these tips for protecting the health of your animals:

1. ~~K~~Keep yourself healthy. If animals contract COVID-19, it is much more likely they will have picked it up from us than from each other.

2. ~~W~~Wash your hands with soap frequently before handling your pets, especially after being in public places with lots of people, like grocery stores, church, etc. Make sure you have contact with soap for at least 20 seconds. In vet school we were taught to sing the whole alphabet while washing our hands to estimate the time.

3. ~~U~~Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent ethanol when you are unable to access a sink for hand washing. It’s a good idea to carry these with you.

4. ~~A~~Avoid letting your pets lick you on the nose, mouth, and mucous membranes. This is important for preventing transmission of multiple diseases to each other, and not just COVID-19.

5. ~~K~~Keep your animals updated on their other vaccines. We don’t currently have vaccines for COVID-19 in any species, and so far, we don’t see evidence that the virus can make our animals sick. However, respiratory viruses cause many more problems when there are other pathogens present, so protect your dog from canine influenza, bordetella, etc.



Photo Credit: Jennifer Skiff



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*Animal Wellness Veterinary Council veterinarians are available for comment upon request.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines

of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

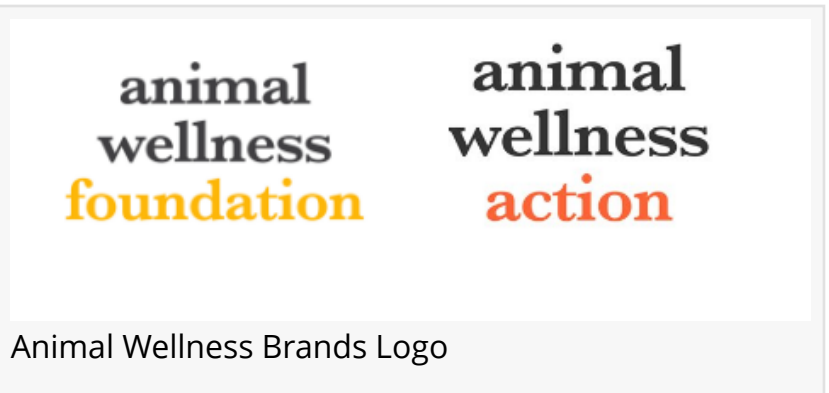
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