

UNCLASSIFIED

INFORMATION PAPER

MCPH-VTS
05 March 2020

SUBJECT: 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Companion Animals

1. Purpose: To provide guidance concerning COVID-19 and companion animals.

2. BLUF: There is currently no evidence that indicates domestic animal species, to include dogs, pose a risk of human infection with COVID-19. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 will impact Military Working Dog (MWD) readiness, the health of other Government Owned Animals, or Service members' privately owned animals (i.e. pets). DoD Veterinary Services (VS) is monitoring the situation and planning for all animal health and food defense contingencies.

3. Facts:

a. The National Veterinary Services of Hong Kong reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) evidence that a dog has tested positive for the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. This pet was in the same household and had close exposure to its owner who was symptomatic and confirmed as having COVID-19. The test, conducted by real time-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA on nasal and oral swabs obtained from the dog, showed the presence of SARS-CoV-2 genetic material (i.e. RNA). The dog was removed from the household, placed in isolation, and similar diagnostic testing was performed 48 hours later producing the same positive results. These findings highly suggest that SARS-CoV-2 was transmitted from the human patient to the pet and that environmental contamination was less likely. To date, this dog remains asymptomatic (no evidence of clinical disease) and is undergoing serial monitoring while in isolation.

b. There is no evidence that dogs or other domestic animal species play a role in the spread of this human disease or that they become sick from the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Further studies are needed to determine if and how different animals are affected by COVID-19, if at all. VS will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

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

d. The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human-to-human transmission. There is no justification in taking measures against companion animals which may compromise their welfare (see recommended measures in paragraph 4b and 4c).

4. Recommendations:

a. There are no reports of companion or other animals becoming clinically symptomatic (i.e. sick) with COVID-19 nor is there evidence that companion or other animals play a significant epidemiological role in human transmission and disease. However, because animals and people can sometimes share diseases (i.e. zoonotic diseases), human patients who are symptomatic with clinical signs suggestive of and/or diagnosed with COVID-19, should limit contact with companion and other animals.

b. Regardless of COVID-19 concerns, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented when handling and caring for animals. 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.

c. People who are symptomatic or under medical attention for COVID-19 and require home care should avoid close contact with their pets and other animals. When possible, another member of the household (or a designated pet care provider) should assume routine care for the animals. If alternative pet care providers are not an option and the pet remains in the home, aforementioned good hygiene practices should be followed and a face mask should be donned.

d. Utilizing the One Health approach, Public Health (PH), Preventive Medicine (PM), and VS should work together to share information. This includes, but is not limited to, conducting an informed risk assessment when a person with COVID-19 reports being in contact with companion or other animals. Depending on the scenario, management of the human patient as well as the pet involved may require significant collaboration among military, local, state, and other federal veterinary and public health authorities.

e. When a military public health professional is notified of an animal in the home of a person with COVID-19, they should notify DoD VS personnel.

f. COVID-19 is a newly emerged disease and the situation is still evolving. DoD VS continues to work together with the CDC, USDA, and other interagency partners to ensure consistent, well-informed, and scientifically based messaging.

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Approved by: COL Greiner

Selected References

Army Public Health Center. Veterinary Services One Health website. <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/docs/DOC-615112>. Most up-to-date COVID-19 information pertaining to DoD Veterinary Services and applicable DoD-relevant documents.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2019 Novel Coronavirus website. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>. This website has the most up to date information about the 2019-nCoV outbreak including general information, recommendations, and outbreak maps. The website also contains a robust FAQ section including questions on pets and other animals and animal products.

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