



Press Information

WSAVA Moves to Reassure Pet Owners

'No evidence that COVID-19 can be contracted from pets'

The [World Small Animal Veterinary Association](https://www.wsava.org) (WSAVA) has moved to reassure pet owners following the news that a dog in Hong Kong, quarantined after it had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 has died. The dog had been released after two weeks of quarantine having subsequently tested negative for the virus.

The dog, a 17-year-old Pomeranian, had shown no clinical signs of COVID-19. However, it did have significant unrelated health problems including cardiac and renal issues and is believed to have passed away from these and old age, possibly exacerbated by the stress of quarantine away from familiar surroundings. The WSAVA confirms that there is no evidence that the dog contracted COVID-19, nor that it could have passed the viral cause to another human or animal.

On March 19, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) in Hong Kong announced that a second dog, a German Shepherd, had also tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. The dog was quarantined after its owner was confirmed with COVID-19. Although the dog has tested positive, it has no clinical signs of disease. Another dog from the same residence has tested negative for the SARS-CoV2. It also has no relevant clinical signs and has been quarantined. The dogs will continue to be tested for the remainder of the quarantine period.

WSAVA President Dr Shane Ryan said: "While there is still much we don't know about COVID-19, we do know that the Pomeranian dog did not die from the virus, and the second dog is also showing no signs, either of the disease or of being able to transmit it to other pets or people. The current evidence still strongly indicates that COVID-19 cannot be contracted from pets."

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The WSAVA says its priority is to support its member veterinarians who care for companion animals around the world and it urges pet owners not to panic and, instead, to continue to care for their companion animals and to enjoy their company. In difficult times, such as these we face today, says the WSAVA, pets can play a very positive role, providing companionship to the isolated and lonely.

The WSAVA's Scientific Committee and One Health Committee have worked together provide Advice to its members and pet owners, which can be found here:

https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19_WSAVA-Advisory-Document-Mar-19-2020.pdf

Dr Michael Lappin, chair of the WSAVA's One Health Committee and Dr Mary Marcondes, Co-Chair of the WSAVA Scientific Advisory Committee, recommend that veterinarians remind owners to:

- keep their companion animals with them if they are self-quarantined
- maintain good hygiene practices, including washing hands when interacting with their pets
- arrange care for any animals left at home with family or friends should they be hospitalized
- contact their veterinarian immediately if they have questions or concerns.

On March 13, IDEXX Laboratories, an international provider of veterinary diagnostics and software, announced that it had evaluated thousands of canine and feline samples during the validation of a new veterinary test system for SARS-CoV-2 and seen no positive results.

Dr Ryan continued: "We remain very concerned at reports of many animals being abandoned, killed or taken to shelters because their owners fear that they might carry the virus when this is not supported by evidence. In addition to the suffering this causes to the animals concerned, their owners will also cease to benefit from all the positive aspects of

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owning a pet which are even more important as so many of us are now having to limit contact with other people.

“We urge pet owners to listen to their veterinarian’s advice and to follow our recommendations to keep themselves and their companion animals safe.”

The WSAVA represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide through its 113 member associations. Its core activities include the development of WSAVA Global Guidelines in key areas of veterinary practice, including pain management, nutrition and vaccination, and the provision of continuing education.

For further information:

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