



BSI SITUATION REPORT

Hong Kong tests more dogs for COVID-19 virus

Released 20 March 2020
To Controller, COVID-19 Response
Intelligence Function Lead, COVID-19 Response
From Biosecurity Intelligence team

Key Judgements

- Despite a second dog in Hong Kong testing positive for COVID-19 virus, we assess that dogs are **unlikely** to become sick with COVID-19 or transmit the virus to humans or other dogs.
- There would be little benefit in quarantining dogs living with COVID-19 cases in NZ.

Background

1. We recently assessed that domestic animals were unlikely to acquire and transmit COVID-19 virus.^{[1][2]} Since then a number of dogs have been quarantined and a positive test result has been reported for a second dog in Hong Kong.^[3]

- Two dogs from the same household were placed in quarantine after their owner tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday 18 March.
- One of the two dogs returned a positive test for COVID-19 viral material. Neither dog is showing clinical signs of COVID-19. Hong Kong authorities plan further testing.

2. As noted in our previous reports,^{[2][4]} the first dog to test positive in Hong Kong has since died, but the cause of death is unlikely to be COVID-19.^[5] The series of tests were ambiguous as to whether it had a low level infection or was passively carrying viral material. The result for the second dog is similarly ambiguous. Currently available evidence indicates that, if a dog exposed to a COVID-19 patient can be infected at all, this would be a rare event and the level of infection would be very low.

- The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) and the USA's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) all recommend that COVID-19 patients restrict their contact with pets, as a precautionary measure until the virus is better understood.^{[6][7][8]}

3. In this report, we update our assessment of whether dogs play a significant role in the spread of COVID-19.

Assessment

Can dogs spread COVID-19?

4. It is highly unlikely that dogs can spread COVID-19 to people or other dogs. We have seen no reporting that the COVID-19 tested dogs in Hong Kong have transmitted the virus to people or other dogs. More generally, we have seen no reports of people or other animals contracting COVID-19 from dogs.

- Similarly, in the SARS epidemic in 2003, a few dogs tested positive for the virus without transmitting it or showing clinical signs.

Should dogs living with confirmed cases in NZ be put into quarantine?

5. There would be little benefit in quarantining dogs living with COVID-19 cases in NZ, as they are unlikely to spread the virus.

- While acknowledging there is no evidence of animal susceptibility, OIE, WSAVA and CDC continue to advise that people with COVID-19 minimise physical contact with their pets, and observe appropriate hygiene measures.^{[6] [7] [8]}
- Quarantining could compromise the welfare of the dogs and their owners.^[6]
- MPI currently recommends that dogs are not moved off a property where there is a confirmed COVID-19 case in the household.^[9]

Should dogs living with confirmed cases in NZ be tested for COVID-19?

6. There would be little benefit in testing dogs living with people who have COVID-19 in NZ. Currently available tests would not indicate dogs' capability to spread the virus, and so would provide little or no insight into the risks to either humans or other dogs.

Conclusion

7. There is no current evidence that dogs can get sick with COVID-19 or transmit COVID-19 virus to humans or other dogs. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 and provide updates as required.

References

1. BSI/BSRA report, 'Does the novel coronavirus that has emerged in China impact domestic animals?' Released 7 February 2020. [20200207 Domestic animals and 2019-nCoV.pdf](#)
2. BSI/BSRA report, 'Can COVID-19 infect domestic animals?' Released 5 March 2020. [20200207 Domestic animals and 2019-nCoV.pdf](#)
3. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3075993/coronavirus-hong-kong-confirms-second-dog>. Accessed 20 March 2020.
4. BSI Intelligence Summary 003/20. Released 19 March 2020. [20200319 BSI INTSUM.pdf](#)
5. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3075770/coronavirus-very-unlikely-hong-kong-dog-tested>. Accessed 20 March 2020.
6. <https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/> Accessed 20 March 2020.
7. <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/WSAVA-Issues-Guidance-on-Pets-and-the-New-Coronavirus.pdf>. Accessed 20 March 2020.
8. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor_1584390773118. Accessed 20 March 2020.
9. <https://www.agriculture.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-animal-welfare/>. Accessed 20 March 2020

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BIOSECURITY THREAT LEVEL DEFINITION

Threat Definition	Qualitative Statement
The biosecurity threat is assessed as very unlikely	Remote / Highly unlikely
The biosecurity threat is assessed as unlikely	Improbable / Unlikely
The biosecurity threat is assessed as possible but not expected	Theoretical possibility
The biosecurity threat is assessed as feasible and could well occur	Probable / Likely
The biosecurity threat is assessed as very likely	Very probable / Highly Likely
The biosecurity threat is expected imminently	Almost certain