

# COVID-19 - An update for WSAVA Members

Week ending April 3rd, 2020

Our COVID-19 update of March 27 ended with a STOP PRESS note about reports of a cat living in Belgium that was reported to be RT-PCR positive and clinically ill.

Following the publication of a manuscript showing cats and ferrets to be theoretically susceptible to infection by SARS-CoV-2 based on in vitro receptor binding, a naturally exposed cat in Belgium was reported (18/03). The cat was living with a family member with COVID-19, was PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, and had clinical signs of transient vomiting, diarrhea, and respiratory disease. The cat recovered uneventfully and monitoring is on-going to determine whether it develops serum antibodies to the virus. It cannot be determined with certainty that this cat was ill because of SARS-CoV-2.

Data from SARS-CoV-19 experimental infection models in cats, ferrets and other species have started to appear in the literature and a pre-print of a SARS-CoV-2 experimental model currently undergoing peer review has been widely discussed on social media. In this work, SARS-CoV-2 infection was induced in a number of species by inoculation of a high viral dose and some of the animals with primary infection, including cats, were able to pass the virus to other animals housed in close proximity. Clinical signs of disease were recognized in some of the animals.

This type of work helps us to understand the host range of COVID-19, the pathogenesis, and to develop further models for treatment and prevention studies. However, the WSAVA One Health and Scientific Advisory Committees strongly emphasize that these types of studies cannot be directly correlated to what happens in the field. Most importantly, we do not yet know whether the doses of SARS-CoV-2 used to initiate the primary infections of cats, ferrets, and dogs in the experimental studies would be achieved in a natural setting, where an infected owner is the source of infection.

It should also be remembered that public health services around the world monitoring the spread of SARS-CoV-2, have again ended this week steadfastly stating that there is **no evidence of transmission from companion animals to people**. As recommended in our Advisory, however, individuals who know they have COVID-19 should minimize direct contact with their pets to avoid potential transmission.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released 'interim recommendations for intake of companion animals from households where humans with COVID-19 are present' late this week. The document contains a reminder to house SARS-CoV-2 pets in the home if possible. It also says that bathing is not needed and that healthy exposed pets should be housed with minimal contact with others (pets and people) for 14 days while further information concerning the prevalence and duration of natural infections in cats is gathered.

A webinar on this topic was released on April 2, in which I represented the WSAVA and Colorado State University with Mr Jim Tedford the President & CEO of The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement and Dr Julie Levy from the University of Florida. Dr Levy is actively involved in the American Association of Shelter Veterinarians which worked closely with the CDC and AVMA on the recommendations.

[Watch the webinar here](#)

In the United States, more of our regulatory agencies are announcing relaxation of telemedicine restrictions to aid veterinarians in helping companion animals while maintain social distancing for more routine cases. The announcement for Colorado veterinarians came just yesterday. You can read it [here](#): We hope that other states and countries will follow suit.

[Read the full announcement here](#)

These were the key developments this week so I'd like to end by reminding you that, if you haven't checked it for a few days, please re-visit the [WSAVA's COVID-19 resource hub](#) as we have added content in new languages this week. With this in mind, I should of course thank our hard-working Translation Committee for its magnificent work to translate content, sometimes overnight, to make it as accessible to as many of our members as possible.

We thank you too for all you are doing to continue to care for your patients and reassure their owners. Please keep yourselves and your families safe in these difficult times.

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[Visit the WSAVA COVID-19 resource hub here](#)

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**Vision Statement:** All companion animals worldwide receive veterinary care that ensures their optimal health and welfare  
**Mission Statement:** To advance the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide through an educated, committed and collaborative global community of veterinary peers