

COVID-19 - An update for WSAVA Members April 25th, 2020

In the days since our last update on April 11, 2020, there have been many notable reports concerning SARS-CoV-2 and small companion animals. WSAVA was fortunate to have the support of the Purina Institute and Zoetis Inc. to host a webinar that covered most of the current issues at the time the webinar first aired on April 17. If you have not watched it yet, you can view it here:



[View the webinar here](#)

We will be adding translations of the content in several languages to the [WSAVA's COVID-19 resource hub](#) over the next few days. It contains a wealth of resources on COVID-19 and companion animals to help you, with new content being added weekly so please check it regularly and urge your members to do the same.

Since the webinar, the interrelated topics that have generated the most discussion are:

- how common are SARS-CoV-2 infections in naturally exposed dogs and cats?
- how likely are these animals to develop clinical illness from this virus?
- should the veterinary profession be performing wide-spread testing of dogs and cats to help to answer the first two questions?

Soon after our webinar, another serological survey paper was made available for outside review. In it, serological test results were reported for 35 species, including some dogs and cats. Data from Wuhan City, the presumed origin of the pandemic, showed that all of the 15 pet dogs, 99 street dogs, 66 pet cats, and 21 street cats were negative for antibodies against SARS-CoV-2.

[Read the paper here](#)

Junhua Deng et al. SHORT COMMUNICATION Serological survey of SARS-CoV-2 for experimental, domestic, companion and wild animals excludes intermediate hosts of 35 different species of animals *Transbound Emerg Dis* 2020 Apr 17

This week, the first two cats in the United States to test positive for SARS-CoV-2 RNA by rtPCR assay were reported and the CDC and USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) subsequently posted their findings and recommendations. The cats were initially identified by a commercial laboratory doing independent surveillance work using samples submitted for testing for other pathogens. These cats both had a mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery. Public health and animal health officials are still learning about SARS-CoV-2, but there is no evidence that pets play a role in spreading the virus. Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals that may compromise their welfare.

There is more information available here:

- [CDC Media Statement](#)
- [USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#)

To date, several commercial laboratories conducting voluntary surveillance work and providing their results have reportedly tested more than 7,500 dogs and cats with only the two positive feline cases detected to date.

A novel approach to identifying trends in clinical illness in dogs and cats was recently reported by pet medical insurance provider, Trupanion. The company has data from millions of dog and cat insurance claims over 20 years. In a webinar posted on April 17th, Dr. Steve Weinrauch, BVMS, MRCVS, Chief Veterinary Officer, Trupanion showed that, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, respiratory claims have not seen an upward trend. Detailed analysis of claims data is a critical part of how Trupanion operates and has been consistently reviewed for decades. The company is committed to continuing with plans to alert the CDC if any regional trends are noted.



[View the webinar here](#)

As of April 23, 2020, WHO reports 2,626,321 confirmed COVID-19 cases in people while the total of confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 in dogs and cats stands at fewer than ten. The failure to detect more positive cases in dogs and cats is undoubtedly related in part to a lack of widespread testing in these species. However, based on the experimental and natural exposure information gathered to date, infection of dogs and cats is most likely associated with exposure to an infected human. It is difficult to infect dogs and cats with SARS-CoV-2, clinical illness is unlikely and self-limited when it occurs, and long-term shedding at levels likely to infect a new human has still not been documented. This means that the results of testing of individual animals is unlikely to be of clinical benefit. However, well-designed epidemiologic studies are needed to further define the role of cats and dogs in this pandemic.

Public health and animal health entities around the world continue to review the cumulative data on companion animals daily and to update recommendations frequently. For example, the new CDC guidelines for veterinarians were published on April 23, 2020 and will be updated frequently as new information is gathered. Please also refer to guidelines published in your countries.

Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics During the COVID-19 Response

[Information on keeping both people and animals safe and healthy](#) is also available

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

World Small Animal Veterinary Association

www.wsava.org

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



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