



## **COVID-19 - An update for WSAVA Members**

### **November 2nd, 2021**

Thankfully, over recent months many countries around the world have made great progress in distribution and administration of SARS-CoV-2 [vaccines](#) to the owners of small companion animals. The administration of a booster vaccination to some groups of people is now approved or recommended for some of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) used in many countries: <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>

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This is great news for the animals that WSAVA serves as it still appears that most new infections of small companion animals come from an infected person, usually presumed to be the owner. Being fully vaccinated is likely to lessen risk of severe illness and should lessen the exposure of others, including pets, to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In addition, holding fully vaccinated status can also change the Public Health [recommendations](#) in some countries.

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## **WSAVA responds to the recent killing of dogs in Vietnam due to COVID concerns**

However, it is not all good news. It was recently reported that 12 dogs owned by a couple in Vietnam were killed while they were hospitalized because of a fear that the dogs would potentially spread the virus to others <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58894320>. The case attracted media attention throughout Vietnam and around the world, causing outrage over the culling of pets. The Vietnam Small Animal Veterinary Association (VSAVA), a WSAVA member association, has expressed great sadness at this report and does not support this policy. The WSAVA also strongly rejects this policy.

Since the risk of people acquiring SARS-CoV-2 infections from animals is considered to be low, partially as a result of experimental studies suggesting that live viral shedding by companion animal species is low and of short duration, there is no need to abandon, euthanize, or harm the pets of infected people: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7585007/>

Instead, we recommend that our member associations work proactively with their regional and national Public Health groups to provide accurate information concerning the low risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from small companion animals to people. With this in mind, a webinar for Vietnamese government officials from the Department of Animal Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on the science concerning COVID-19 with regards to companion animals and current welfare issues took place on November 2. The webinar was led by the Asia Canine Protection Alliance, a coalition of international animal welfare charities committed to improving companion animal welfare in Vietnam. I participated in my role as Chair of the WSAVA's One Health Committee. I will provide an update following the event.

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## Vaccines for companion animals – an update

Following the release of a vaccine for potential use in companion animals in Russia and discussed in the WSAVA eshot in April, Zoetis has been donating thousands of doses of its experimental SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, uniquely formulated for animals, to help veterinarians at zoos and sanctuaries care for their special animals most at risk of infection.

**COVID-19 vaccine for animals**

**COVID-19 multiple species vaccine**

Zoetis' vaccine is authorized for experimental use on a case by case basis by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the appropriate state veterinarians, as well as individual countries' animal health regulatory authority. Based on the information Zoetis has received from the zoos requesting its vaccine, the company expects this vaccine will be used to help protect the health and well-being of more than 100 mammalian species, including non-human primates, large cats and mustelids. WSAVA applauds this research and philanthropy.

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## Dogs in the workplace - an update

A number of countries around the world, including the United States, allowed healthy pet dogs in the workplace before the appearance of SARS-CoV-2. Now that it is known that live SARS-CoV-2 shedding by experimentally infected dogs is low to non-existent, some institutions are re-evaluating their policies and allowing healthy pets back into the employee's personal workspace if the employee is healthy and vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 and all members of the family, including other pets, are healthy.

## There have been some positive outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic!

There have been some positive outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, there is now more data available concerning use of dogs to detect important pathogens like SARS-CoV-2 for potential use in surveillance programs. A number of studies have now been completed or are ongoing in multiple countries with the results from dogs rivaling those of molecular testing techniques.

*Vesga O, Agudelo M, Valencia-Jaramillo AF, Mira-Montoya A, Ossa-Ospina F, Ocampo E, Čiuoderis K, Pérez L, Cardona A, Aguilar Y, Agudelo Y, Hernández-Ortiz JP, Osorio JE. Highly sensitive scent-detection of COVID-19 patients in vivo by trained dogs. PLoS One. 2021 Sep 29;16(9):e0257474. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0257474. PMID: 34587181; PMCID: PMC8480816.*

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## Useful sources of information to monitor progress on the pandemic

[Websites maintained by the World Health Organization](#), [the Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [World Organization for Animals \(OIE\)](#) are still among the best websites for tracking the progress of the COVID-19 pandemic in both people and small companion animals. [The OIE website](#) can be used to track cases in animals around the world. Worldwide health organizations still report that the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is likely to be low. Specific [recommendations](#) for handling animals during the pandemic are available in some countries, including the CDC in the United States.

Please let us know if you have questions or comments.

Stay safe!

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**World Small Animal Veterinary Association**

[www.wsava.org](http://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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