

April 10, 2020

COVID-19 and Pets

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I hope this finds you, and those you know and love, well. To say that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed all of our lives is an understatement, at best.

If you are reading this, you probably, like us, have a deep love and concern for our animal population and perhaps you have questions or fears about what does this virus mean for our pets, domestic farm animals, and wildlife. The recent report of the COVID-19 virus being detected in a tiger in a NYC zoo has raised even more questions. Thus, I am writing this to alert you to what we know, what we think we know, and what we still do not know (as of yet), according to the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), the CDC (Center for Disease Control), the WHO (World Health Organization) and the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association).

Because this coronavirus (the virus is identified as SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 is the name of the disease it causes) is a “novel” or new/previously unknown virus, our world’s scientists have had to discover and learn vital information about it in real time, even while it was spreading wildly throughout the world. We still do not have all the information and answers about this virus and because of that, recommendations can quickly change based on new knowledge. Having said that, here is the latest as it pertains to animals:

We do not know the exact source of the current outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The first infections were linked to a live animal market in China, when in December of 2019 it was first discovered in people. The virus is now spreading from person to person worldwide.

2. We do not have evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19 to people or that they might be a source of infection in the United States
3. The first case of an animal testing positive for the virus in the United States was this last week in a tiger that had a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. Public health officials believe the large cats in that zoo became sick after exposure to an employee who was actively shedding virus. The zoo was closed in mid-March and the first tiger began showing clinical signs on March 27. All of the large cats are expected to recover and no other animals in the zoo are exhibiting clinical signs of disease.
4. The CDC is aware of a very small number of pets outside the United States which reportedly tested positive for the virus (or developed antibodies to the virus) that causes COVID-19, after having had close contact with people with COVID-19.

Now that COVID-19 virus infections are widely distributed in the human population there is a possibility for some animals to become infected through close contact with infected humans. Infection of animals with COVID-19 virus may have implications for animal health and welfare, and for wildlife conservation.

Therefore the following are the recommendations from the AVMA, which are also supported by guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE):

Pets in homes with owners with COVID-19

Out of an abundance of caution, and until more is known about the virus, those ill with COVID-19 should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people. Have another member of your household or business take care of feeding and otherwise caring for any animals, including pets. If you have a service animal or you must care for your animals, including pets, then wear a facemask; don’t share food, kiss, or hug them, and wash your hands before and after any contact with them. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. Additional guidance on managing pets in homes where people are sick with COVID-19 is available from the CDC.

There have been no reports of pets or livestock becoming ill with COVID-19

in the United

States. At this point in time, there is also no evidence that domestic animals, including pets and livestock, can spread COVID-19 to people.

Keeping pets safe

For responsible pet owners, preparing in advance is key. Make sure you have an emergency kit prepared, with at least two weeks' worth of your pet's food and any needed medications. Usually we think about emergency kits like this in terms of what might be needed for an evacuation, but it's also good to have one prepared in the case of quarantine or self-isolation when you cannot leave your home.

Animal owners without symptoms of COVID-19 should continue to practice good hygiene during interactions with animals. This includes washing hands before and after such interactions or handling animal food, waste, or supplies. While we are recommending these as good practices, it is important to remember that there is currently no reason at this time to think that domestic animals, including pets, in the United States might be a source of infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus responsible for COVID-19).

I hope this has been helpful to you in answering your animal health concerns regarding COVID-19. As new information becomes available, we will be sure to post it on Facebook at Waltz Animal Clinic, and on our website www.waltzanimalclinic.com

As always, even during this pandemic, we are here for you and your pets.
part, and we will "get through this together".

Stay safe, be smart and do your

With kind regards,
Robin A. Waltz, DVM