



COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUR PETS

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some infecting humans and other certain animals such as cattle, cats, dogs, bats and camels. Canine and feline coronavirus only infect animals and do not infect humans. Some of the corona viruses that do infect animals, such as MERS Cov that infect camels, however, do become able to infect people, but this is rare.

The exact source of the current outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is, in the wake of a lot of speculation and false reporting, still not known.

Although a dog in Hong Kong tested “weak positive” for COVID 19 it has not shown any symptoms of the disease. It is as yet not being confirmed if the “weak positive” result is due to the presence of the virus itself or if the dog actually contracted the disease as it has not shown any antibody response up to date. There is thus still no evidence to suggest that any animals, including pets, livestock, or wildlife, might be a source of COVID-19 infection at this time.

Except for direct exposure to the droplets of an infected individual being breathed in, transmission via touching a contaminated surface or object (pets) and then touching the mouth, nose, or possibly eyes is also possible. Smooth non-porous surfaces (e.g. countertops, doorknobs) transmit viruses better than porous materials (e.g. pet fur) because porous materials absorb and trap the virus, making it harder to contract through simple touch.

However, because all animals can carry various pathogens that can be transmitted to people the following health habits should be practised around your pets:

- Wash your hands after handling animals, their food, waste, or supplies.
- Practice good animal husbandry and clean up after pets properly.
- Seek advice from your local veterinarian if you have any concern about the health of your pet.

How to protect pets if you have COVID 19

If you might have COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed), you should practise social distancing from animals just as you would with humans. If possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. Avoid contact with your pet including, petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around them whilst you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. **DO NOT USE ANY SANITIZER ON YOUR PET AND PREVENT TOUCHING HIM JUST AFTER YOU USED ANY FORM OF SANITIZER.**

The South African Veterinary Association is a voluntary association for registered veterinarians. We have been in existence for 100 years. We are committed to upholding the highest professional and scientific standards, and to utilising the professional knowledge, skill and resources of our members, to foster close ties with the community and thus promote the health and welfare of animals and mankind.