

VETFLASH!

Dear SAVA Member,

As the Covid-19 pandemic spreads new data becomes available. We believe it is our duty to inform you of this. We must, however, request you to maintain caution as research on the virus in the animal environment is in its infancy. We appreciate that the media aims to sensationalize and we believe that sourcing credible information is critical to avoid societal panic.

In this VetFlash, we would like to point you to two relevant publications (the attachment labelled "Belgium_28_03_20" is from the OIE's website, [here](#)). Covid-19 had been detected in the stools and vomits of a cat in Belgium, showing clinical signs of digestive and respiratory disease. The cat belonged to a person confirmed infected by SARS-CoV2. The elements reported do not allow to conclude that there is a productive viral infection, but allow to suspect it (PCR Ct values compatible with a high number of viral genome copies and clinical signs compatible with a coronavirus infection).

In the other attachment, you will find research performed in the State Key Laboratory of Veterinary Biotechnology, Harbin Veterinary Research Institute and the National High Containment Laboratory for Animal Diseases Control and Prevention. Both of the laboratories are in the People's Republic of China.

It is critical to repost the headline on the website where this was obtained here (here is the [link](#)): **bioRxiv is receiving many new papers on coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. A reminder: these are preliminary reports that have not been peer-reviewed. They should not be regarded as conclusive, guide clinical practice/health-related behaviour, or be reported in news media as established information.**

It would appear that, amongst the more than 1,000,000 human infections there are extremely few incidences where Covid-19 has been identified in animals. In the cases where it were, it has always been in a household that has a confirmed human case of Covid-19.

As research emerges, we will keep you informed. In the meantime, we advise the following precautionary measures:

1. Animals in households that have confirmed cases of Covid-19, should be isolated with the household(Animal testing is currently not available in South Africa and thus should be in quarantine with the owners until their quarantine is lifted). We appreciate it is exceedingly difficult with felines, but must be attempted as far as possible.
2. Physical distancing with the animals should be similar as it is with humans.
3. If an animal was touched, the person should use hand sanitizer immediately thereafter
4. Do not advise clients to use any form of hand sanitizer on animals (as the composition of hand sanitizer is not known), nor should the animal be touched immediately after using hand sanitizer. Normal animal shampoo may be used, but within reasonable regularity.
5. If an animal has to be treated from a household that has suspected or confirmed Covid-19 persons:
 - a. Be absolutely convinced that the situation is an emergency
 - b. If so, exercise extreme care by limited the number of persons in your practice that has contact with the animal
 - c. Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - d. Remove and wash PPE directly after consultation in normal dishwashing detergent.

In all instances, it is required that you exercise your professional discretion when deciding to perform a consultation on an animal, bearing in mind human and animal welfare.

Best regards,
Gert Steyn
Managing Director

