At present, there is no evidence that companion animals/pets such as dogs or cats can spread or transmit the new coronavirus. However, it is always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with pets. This protects you against various common bacteria such as *E. coli* and Salmonella as well.

The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human to human transmission. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals can spread the disease. Some examples of animal infections have been reported to the OIE. So far, these appear to be isolated cases, and there is no evidence that dogs or cats are playing a role in the spread of this human disease. Further studies are underway to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19 virus.

There is no evidence to support restrictions to movement or trade of companion animals. There are reports of transmission of Corona Virus from Humans to Tiger in USA however these are exceptional cases and need more elaborate systematic research to conclusively establish link between COVID-19 and animals. However, because animals and people can sometimes share diseases (known as zoonotic diseases), it is still recommended that people who are sick with COVID-19 limit contact with companion and other animals until more information is known about the virus.

When handling and caring for animals, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented. This includes hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing, licking or sharing food.

When possible, people who are sick or under medical attention for COVID-19 should avoid close contact with their pets and have another member of their household care for their animals. If they must look after their pet, they should maintain good hygiene practices and wear a face mask.

Always wash your hands and your child’s after handling or being around animals or their waste, food, or supplies (like cages, water bowls, toys, beds, leashes etc). This is especially important before handling baby bottles and pacifiers or holding infants.

Children under 5 years of age, adults over 65 years of age, and anyone with a weakened immune system should avoid contact with pet animals.

Always supervise children around pets. Don’t let them kiss their pets, hold pets close to their faces, or allow pets to lick their face or mouth.

Keep pets and their supplies out of the kitchen or other areas where you prepare, serve, or eat food.

Clean cages, habitats, and supplies outside the home when possible to avoid contaminating surfaces. If that is not possible, then clean them in a laundry sink or bathtub and then disinfect that area immediately afterwards.

Avoid rough play with animals to prevent bites and scratches. Teach children to play with animals appropriately. Do not let small children near pets that are eating.
ROLE OF VETERINARY AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

- Public Health and Veterinary Services should work together using a One Health approach to share information and conduct a risk assessment when a person with COVID-19 reports being in contact with companion or other animals.
- If a decision is made as a result of a risk assessment to test a companion animal which has had close contact with a person/owner infected with COVID-19, it is recommended that RT-PCR be used to test oral, nasal and fecal/rectal samples.
- While there is no evidence of a COVID-19 infection spreading from one animal to another, keeping animals that test positive for COVID-19 away from unexposed animals should be considered best practice.

KEY POINTS

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people, and others cause illness in certain types of 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, but the virus is now primarily spreading from person to person.
- 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 India.
- Very small number of pets around the globe reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 after close contact with people with COVID-19.
- We do not have evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading the 2019 novel coronavirus in India.
- Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19.
- The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human to human transmission. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals have spread the disease. Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals which may compromise their welfare.
- Always rely on authentic sources of information.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid close contact from peoples with symptom
- Avoid touching face with unwashed hands
- Clean surfaces & objects people frequently touch
- Frequently wash your hands with soap

Acknowledgments

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