

COVID-19 and animals

COVID-19

- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a new strain of corona virus that has not previously been identified in humans and was first identified in 2019 in Wuhan, China.
- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold and seasonal flu, as well as more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and now COVID-19.
- COVID-19 can spread directly from affected person to healthy person through small droplets from the nose or mouth when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales or indirectly thorough contact with the fomites (objects and surfaces) around the person.
- According to WHO, most commonly reported clinical symptoms in humans in laboratory-confirmed cases is fever, dry cough, fatigue, sputum production, difficulty in breathing, sore throat, headache and body/joint pain (myalgia or arthralgia). The risk of COVID-19 is more in the people above 60 years of age as well as people with hypertension, diabetes, heart related illnesses, respiratory disease and cancer are at high risk.
- The WHO advises that COVID-19 infection can be effectively prevented through personal hygiene, regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose while coughing and sneezing, proper disposal of contaminated material, proper cooking of meat and eggs, avoiding close contact with person showing symptoms of respiratory illness, restricted movements and outdoors activities, avoiding crowding are the best practices to prevent its spread.

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- Based on available information, although the first case of COVID-19 was linked to direct exposure to seafood market in Wuhan, subsequent cases were not associated to such exposure and hence role of animals in transmission of COVID-19 is not clear.
- Transmission of COVID-19 from affected persons to animals (one cat in Belgium and tiger in USA) has been reported recently, however a study in China has revealed poor replication of virus in dogs, ducks, and other domestic animals with more replication in cats and ferrets.
- Hence, as a general precaution, in accordance with the advice offered by WHO, when visiting live animal markets, animal product markets or after handling of the pet or domestic animals, general hygiene measures should be taken such as use of personal protective measures, proper washing of hands, avoiding unnecessary touching animals etc.
- World Animal Health Organization (OIE) has advised that person showing active illness should avoid close contact with pets and other animals. Any report of transmission of COVID-19 to animals should be immediately reported to OIE.

- There are no reports of transmission of virus through meat or other animal products, however, as general food safety measure, it is advised for proper cooking of these products and avoid post-cooking contamination in households and commercial food establishments.
- For latest global updates on COVID-19 please visit the website of WHO (www.who.int), World Animal Health Organization (www.oie.int) and for Indian guidelines visit NCDC and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare websites (www.ncdc.gov.in and www.mohfw.gov.in).



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