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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 UPDATE (123): USA (NEW YORK) ANIMAL, CAT, CONFIRMED

A ProMED-mail post

<http://www.promedmail.org>

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International Society for Infectious Diseases

<http://www.isid.org>

Date: Wed 22 Apr 2020

Source: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) [edited]

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/news/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sars-cov-2-animals

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) today [Wed 22 Apr 2020] announced the 1st confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus causing COVID-19) infection in 2 pet cats. These are the 1st pets in the United States to test positive for SARS-CoV-2.

The cats live in 2 separate areas of New York state. Both had mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery. SARS-CoV-2 infections have been reported in very few animals worldwide, mostly in those having close contact with a person with COVID-19.

At this time, routine testing of animals is not recommended. Should other animals be confirmed positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the United States, USDA will post the findings at

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_One_Health/sars-cov-2-animals-us. State animal health and public health officials will take the lead in making determinations about whether animals should be tested for SARS-CoV-2.

In the NY cases announced today [Wed 22 Apr 2020], a veterinarian tested the 1st cat after it showed mild respiratory signs. No individuals in the household were confirmed to be ill with COVID-19. The virus may have been transmitted to this cat by mildly ill or asymptomatic household members or through contact with an infected person outside its home.

Samples from the 2nd cat were taken after it showed signs of respiratory illness. The owner of the cat tested positive for COVID-19 prior to the cat showing signs. Another cat in the household has shown no signs of illness.

Both cats tested presumptive positive for SARS-CoV-2 at a private veterinary laboratory, which then reported the results to state and federal officials. The confirmatory testing was conducted at NVSL and included collection of additional samples.

<https://promedmail.org/promed-post/?id=7256272>

NVSL serves as an international reference laboratory and provides expertise and guidance on diagnostic techniques, as well as confirmatory testing for foreign and emerging animal diseases. Such testing is required for certain animal diseases in the US in order to comply with national and international reporting procedures. The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) considers SARS-CoV-2 an emerging disease, and therefore USDA must report confirmed US animal infections to the OIE.

Public health officials are still learning about SARS-CoV-2, but there is no evidence that pets play a role in spreading the virus in the United States. Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals that may compromise their welfare. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals, including pets, could be affected.

Until we know more, CDC recommends the following:

- Do not let pets interact with people or other animals outside the household.
- Keep cats indoors when possible to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people. [Is there any evidence animals can pass this disease between themselves? - Mod.TG]
- Walk dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 ft from other people and animals.
- Avoid dog parks or public places where a large number of people and dogs gather.

If you are sick with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed by a test), restrict contact with your pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.

- When possible, have another member of your household care for your pets while you are sick.
- Avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food or bedding.
- If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wear a cloth face covering and wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

While additional animals may test positive as infections continue in people, it is important to note performing this animal testing does not reduce the availability of tests for humans. The US government remains committed to increasing nationwide COVID-19 testing for Americans. In fact, the United States has conducted more than 4 million COVID-19 tests for humans, which is more tests than the following nations combined: France, the UK, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, India, Austria, Australia, Sweden, and Canada.

For more information on animals and COVID-19, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>.

For more information about testing in animals, see https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/one_health/downloads/faq-public-on-companion-animal-testing.pdf.

Contact:

For inquiries about COVID-19 and animals, contact <media@cdc.gov>.

For inquiries about the testing and confirmation process for animals, contact <APHISpress@usda.gov>.

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[What is curious about the entire situation is that the private lab confirming this did not notify the NY state Animal Health Diagnostic Center. Secondly, the test itself is interesting. How and when did they validate the test for cats? One might ask the same of the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL). Perhaps it was adapted from a SARS-related test? The validation of the tests in the cats has not been well publicized.

It appears the cats may acquire the disease and people are being asked to be cautious, but there currently appears to be no transmission from cats to humans. - Mod.TG]

[According to a recent report from Italy, researchers from the universities of Padua and Venice are about to start a serosurvey for SARS-CoV-2 covering the domestic cat population of the town Vo. This small town, near Padua and Venice, counting about 3000 citizens, was the site of Italy's 1st COVID-19 outbreak earlier this year [2020]. Vo gained reputation by its successful management of the epidemic, which included mass testing of the town's population and subsequent measures. The objective of the feline study, as explained to Corriere del Veneto in an interview with Massimo Castagnaro, professor of general veterinary pathology and head of the group of researchers, is "to understand if these animals can contract the virus and how they respond. We will take blood samples to understand if, in what way, and to what extent the felines of this municipality, a unique study model, have become infected. We know that the disease passes from man to man, but we want to frame the cat's potential role. Our hypothesis is that it does not play an important role in the spread of the coronavirus, but that the cat can instead become infected by being close to a human affected by the disease." See (in Italian) at <https://www.peopleforplanet.it/covid-19-a-vo-euganeo-gatti-sottoposti-a-test-serologici/>. An earlier serosurvey in China revealed 10-15% positive cats in Wuhan (20200403.7179946). - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map:

New York state, United States: <http://healthmap.org/promed/p/234>]

See Also

COVID-19 update (113): USA (NY) cats, animals, suspected, RFI 20200418.7240811
COVID-19 update (88): Germany, animals, research, pig, chicken, bat, ferret 20200407.7196506
COVID-19 update (85): USA (NY) tiger, OIE 20200406.7191480
COVID-19 update (84): USA, tigers 20200406.7191352
COVID-19 update (76): China (HU) animal, cat, owned, stray, seropositive 20200403.7179946
COVID-19 update (75): China (Hong Kong) cat, OIE 20200403.7179945
COVID-19 update (70): China (Hong Kong) cat, pets & stock 20200402.7173286
COVID-19 update (58): Belgium, cat, clinical case, RFI 20200327.7151215
COVID-19 update (56): China (Hong Kong) animal, dog, final serology positive 20200326.7146438
COVID-19 update (45): China (Hong Kong) animal, dog, 2nd case PCR positive 20200319.7112693
COVID-19 update (37): China (Hong Kong) animal, dog, prelim. serology negative 20200312.7081842
COVID-19 update (30): China (Hong Kong) dog, susp, serology pending 20200306.7057595
COVID-19 update (25): China (Hong Kong) dog, susp, OIE 20200302.7040373
COVID-19 update (22): companion animals, dog susp, RFI 20200229.7036661
COVID-19 update (17): China, animal reservoir, wildlife trade & consumption 20200225.7024245
COVID-19 update (11): animal reservoir, intermediate hosts, pangolin susp 20200220.7009213
COVID-19 update (08): companion animals, RFI 20200218.7002276
COVID-19 update (06): animal reservoir, intermediate hosts 20200217.6997782
Novel coronavirus (40): animal reservoir, pangolin poss intermediate host, RFI 20200210.6972104
Novel coronavirus (28): China (HU) animal reservoir 20200201.6943858
Novel coronavirus (22): reservoir suggested, bats 20200129.6930718
Novel coronavirus (20): China, wildlife trade ban 20200127.6922060
Novel coronavirus (18): China (HU) animal reservoir 20200125.6915411

Novel coronavirus (15): China (HU) wild animal sources 20200123.6909913

Novel coronavirus (03): China (HU) animal reservoir suggested, RFI 20200114.6887480

Novel coronavirus (01): China (HU) WHO, phylogenetic tree 20200112.6885385

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