



مستشفى الملك فيصل التخصصي ومركز الأبحاث
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مؤسسة عامة Gen. Org.

Animals and COVID-19 Virus

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COVID-19 belongs to the family of Corona viruses that affect the Respiratory System, in addition to seasonal Influenza, colds, SARS and MERS. It is important to know that such types of viruses can affect animals like camels, cattle and bats. Rarely do infected animals transmit the infection to humans. There are certain types of viruses that affect animals only but not humans.

Although there is no scientific evidence that animals are the source of COVID-19 virus or might even transmit the infection to humans, on the contrary, humans have been known to transmit the infection to animals. However, there is a pressing need for more studies and researches to help understand the effect that CPVID-19 has on animals.

The transmission of COVID-19 virus infection from animals to humans:

Some Corona viruses that affect animals are rarely capable of being transmitted to humans and therefore spread amongst them. SARS and MERS are examples of infections caused by Corona viruses that originated from animals and spread amongst humans.

It is suspected that COVID-19 virus originated the same way.

It is known that COVID-19 virus originated from the seafood and animal markets, despite the fact that it is mainly transmitted from humans to humans and not from animals to humans.

COVID-19 virus infection is transmitted from a person to another through sprayed virus-infested droplets when coughing or sneezing.

The infection occurs as a result of inhaling the virus-containing droplets, or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching eyes, mouth and nose. Studies have also shown that people who have no symptoms play a key role in spreading the infection. In the same context, there is no evidence that animals can transmit COVID-19 virus infection to humans.

The transmission of COVID-19 virus infection from humans to animals:

A very small number of pets like dogs and cats was infected with COVID-19 virus. Investigations and scientific analysis proved that these pets were infected because of direct exposure to humans infected with COVID-19 virus. A first case report in the United States of America was a tiger that had respiratory symptoms in addition to several lions at New York Zoo. It thought that these animals got the infection from a zookeeper who infected with COVID-19 virus. Hence, there is no substantiated evidence that animals are the source of COVID-19 virus infection or capable of transmitting the infection to humans. On the contrary, humans have been proven to transmit COVID-19 virus infection to animals.

Protecting animals from being infected with COVID-19 virus:

When someone shows symptoms of a respiratory illness like cough, fever and sneezing, or COVID-19 virus infection is suspected; this person should avoid direct contact with pets and other animals and should follow the following instructions to protect pets and other animals from COVID-19 virus infection:

- Ask a family member or a friend to look after the animal.
- Avoid touching or petting the animal.
- If a no one else is available to offer help, Make sure to wash hands before and after coming in contact with the animal.

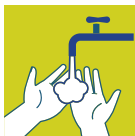
The transmission of COVID-19 virus infection from imported animals and animal products:

Until now, there is no proof the imported animals or animal products can be a source of transmitting and spreading COVID-19 virus infection. In spite of that, the Ministry of Health plays a

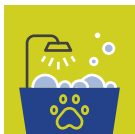
complementary role with related governmental Ministries and Establishments in observing and monitoring in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 virus infection into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Preserve your health and the health of the animals around you:

There is no evidence that either domesticated animals like cats, dogs and cattle or even wild predators are a source of COVID-19 virus infection, however, all animals can carry the pollutants that might cause diseases. Therefore, it is recommended to practice the following healthy habits when handling animals:



- Make sure to wash hands after touching animals or handling their foods, droppings or any related items.



- Maintain the cleanliness of the animals and their surroundings regularly.



- Keep the Vet's appointments to make sure the animals stay healthy.



- In case of an emergency, contact the Vet immediately and follow instructions.

Protecting Animals from CORONAVIRUS Infection:

People who own pets should follow precautionary and preventive measures similar to those applied amongst people as follows:

- Keep cats inside the house and do not allow them to wander outside.
- Put a leash on dogs when taking them for a walk and maintain a distance of at least 2 meters from others.
- Avoid unplanned visits to the vets.
- Avoid public and crowded places like parks, pet beauty salons, animal care homes and even visiting other houses.
- Avoid putting masks or face covers on animal faces because this might cause them harm.
- Contact the vet if your pet develops an illness.
- Do not clean animals with chemical, alcohol, Hydrogen Peroxide or any other unpatented animal care products. There is no evidence that COVID-19 virus infection can be transmitted to pet fur or skin.

Incase if someone who is looking after animals gets infected with COVID-19:

When experiencing respiratory symptoms like cough, fever, sneezing and others, or incase of suspected/confirmed COVID-19 infection, one should avoid close contact with pets or any other animals, adhere to the following instructions to protect the animals for COVID-19 infection:

- Ask a family member or a friend to help you look after the animal.
- Avoid touching and petting the animal.
- If help is unavailable to look after the animals, one should wear a fabric facemask and wash hands before and after contact with the animals.

- If the COVID-19 infected person transmits the infection to his pet, the animal should not be taken to the vet clinic and instead get diagnostic and consultation services through electronic platforms or by resorting to precautionary methods to inspect the infected pet.

Animals infected with COVID-19:

Based on available studies and scientific observations, some infected animals did not show symptoms. Most of these infected animals can be looked after at home, none of the animals was reported dead from COVID-19 infection. Therefore, COVID-19 infected animals should not be abandoned or given a way.

Some symptoms may include:

- Fever.
- Cough.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Lethargy.
- Sneezing.
- Discharge for eyes and nose.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea

In case a pet is infected with COVID-19 do the following:

- Keep infected animals at home except when seeking vet care.
- Isolate COVID-19 infected animals from others in the house by allocating a place in the house for the sick animals until the vet allows mixing with people and other animals.
- Avoid touching, petting sharing drinks, foods and beds with the infected animals.

- Keep separate bedding, food plate and toys for the infected animals from the uninfected ones if available.
- The caregiver might need to observe and record symptoms developed by the infected animals. Should the condition or symptoms worsen like difficulty breathing, the caregiver should immediately contact the vet in order to provide assistance through the phone or clinic visit.
- Keep regular communication with the vet clinic and inform the vet before taking the animal to the clinic.
- Do not clean animals with chemical, alcohol, Hydrogen Peroxide or any other unpatented animal care products.
- Sanitize food containers, toys and other items with patented pet care agents and then rinse with water.
- Wash and reuse soft fabrics like towels and beddings, dirty clothes and fabrics of the infected animals may be washed with those of sound animals.
- If possible, provide a separate trash can for the infected animal. There is no evidence the droppings of COVID-19 infected animals require special precautionary measures other than those of sound animals in general.

When cleaning the droppings do the following:

- Wear gloves for handling the animal droppings.
- Put the droppings in a tightly sealed bag before disposal.
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after disposal of the animal droppings.
- Vet instructions should be followed about the duration of home isolation before mixing with people and other animals. Some infected animals might require some tests to ensure they test negative for COVID-19.

Protecting the caregiver of animals infected with COVID-19:

- Follow the same precautionary measures of looking after COVID-19 infected people at home.
- If the caregiver is a high risk category, like having chronic diseases, then he/she ask for assistance from a family member or a friend to take care of the infected animal.
- The caregiver should wear a fabric facemask and gloves when handling the infected animal.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or by using an at least 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer for all over the hands for 20 seconds until alcohol dries out. Make sure all people in the house follow the same measures especially when coming in contact with the infected animal or handling its belongings.
- Eyes, nose and mouth should not be touched with unwashed hands.
- Avoid putting a facemask or any other face cover on the face of the infected animal.
- Wear gloves when handling the infected animal's food plates, toys, beddings and when cleaning their droppings.
- Put wastes in a tightly sealed bag before throwing it in a trash can. Discard the gloves and wash hands immediately after disposal of wastes.

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>