

Dogs, cats can't pass on coronavirus, but can test positive

March 5 2020



A dog is seen at a pet shop in Hong Kong, Thursday, March 5, 2020. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owner. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus on to humans, but

they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owners.

That's the conclusion of Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department after a dog in quarantine tested weakly positive for the virus Feb. 27, Feb. 28 and March 2, using the canine's nasal and oral cavity samples.

A unidentified spokesman for the department was quoted in a news release as saying. "There is currently no evidence that pet animals can be a source of infection of COVID-19 or that they become sick."

Scientists suspect the virus known as SARS-CoV-2 that causes the disease originated in bats before passing it on to another species, possibly a small wild mammal, that passed it on to humans. However, experts from the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) have unanimously agreed that the dog has a low-level of infection and it is "likely to be a case of human-to-animal transmission."

The dog, and another also in quarantine which has tested negative for the virus, will be tested again before being released. The department suggested any pets, including dogs and cats, from households where someone has tested positive for the virus should be put into quarantine.



A woman wearing face mask and a dog walk on street in Hong Kong, Thursday, March 5, 2020. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owner. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)



In this Feb. 25, 2020, file photo, a resident wearing mask walks her dogs in Beijing. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus on to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owners. That's the conclusion of Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department after a dog in quarantine tested weak positive for the virus Feb. 27, Feb. 28 and March 2, using the canine's nasal and oral cavity samples. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, File)



A woman wearing face mask, walks her dogs in Hong Kong, Thursday, March 5, 2020. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owner. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)



A man wearing face mask, looks at dogs at a pet shop in Hong Kong, Thursday, March 5, 2020. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owner. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)



A woman wearing face mask, walks her dogs in Hong Kong, Thursday, March 5, 2020. Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owner. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

In general, pet owners should maintain good hygiene, including washing hands before and after handling animals, their food and supplies and no kissing them. People who are sick should avoid contact with pets and a veterinarian's advice should be sought if changes in a pet's health conditions are detected.

"Apart from maintaining good hygiene practices, pet owners need not be overly concerned and under no circumstances should they abandon their pets," the spokesman said.

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