

October 23, 2020

## **SARS-CoV-2 Detected in a Dog in Ontario**

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has been notified of a confirmed case of SARS-CoV-2 in a dog in the Niagara region. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19 in humans. The animal was tested as part of a research study, following diagnosis of COVID-19 in several people in the same household. This dog did not have any clinical signs of disease.

The current understanding of COVID-19 is that the overall risk of infection and illness in most domestic animals is low. Current evidence suggests mink, ferrets, cats and more rarely dogs can be infected with SARS-CoV-2. There is still uncertainty about what these infections mean in animals and how this virus behaves in various animal species.

According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), there is no evidence to suggest that animals are playing a role in the spread of this predominantly human disease. There have been no confirmed instances of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from a pet to another animal or human under natural conditions, despite the widespread international outbreak in humans.

Many of the naturally infected animals that have been reported in other countries did not show observable signs of illness. Clinical illness has been reported in mink and experimentally infected cats and is suspected in some naturally exposed cats. In general, coronaviruses can cause signs of either respiratory or gastrointestinal illness in animals.

As a precautionary measure, people with COVID-19 symptoms, or those who are self-isolating due to contact with a COVID-19 case, should restrict contact with their pets, livestock or any other animals, and exercise the same infection control precautions they would around people. Pets belonging to owners infected with COVID-19 should be kept indoors as much as possible and contact between these pets and anyone other than their designated caretaker should be avoided as much as possible.

Under Ontario's Animal Health Act (2009), SARS-CoV-2 is considered an emerging hazard. Veterinarians should report suspect or confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 in animals to the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario (Section 9 AHA and Section 17 Reporting Regulations 277/112).

Testing of pets and livestock species (with the exception of farmed mink) is not recommended at this time, as the virus is primarily transmitted person-to-person and not through animal contact.

If you have a client with an animal that has signs of gastrointestinal or respiratory illness for which other common conditions have been ruled out, and if the animal has been in contact with a person with COVID-19 in the last two weeks and SARS-CoV-2 infection is a differential diagnosis, contact the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario for further guidance.

The Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario can be reached through the OMAFRA Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300.

If you have questions about your health or the health of a family member, please contact your family physician or local Public Health Unit for further information. For veterinarians or animal health professionals working with animals that may have been exposed to people with COVID-19, guidance and recommendations for precautionary measures can be found at: <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/new-covid-19-and-animals-frequently-asked-questions-for-veterinarians>

**Additional information is available at:**

***Canadian COVID-19 Public Health and Animal Health Working Group***

[COVID-19 and Animals - Frequently Asked Questions for Veterinarians](#)

***Canadian Food Inspection Agency***

[COVID-19: Information for Consumers About Food Safety and Animal Health](#)

***World Animal Health Organization (OIE)***

[Questions and Answers on the 2019 Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

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Agricultural Information Contact Centre  
1-877-424-1300

E-mail : [ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca](mailto:ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca)  
[www.ontario.ca/omafra](http://www.ontario.ca/omafra)