



Pets and COVID-19 risk



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There is still no evidence that pets such as dogs and cats are a source of COVID-19 for any animals or humans, said Professor Jacqui Norris, an expert in veterinary microbiology and infectious diseases in the School of Veterinary Science.

"There has been only one dog of a patient with COVID-19 in Hong Kong who has had a 'weak positive' result on samples taken from the mouth and nasal cavity," she said. "This means very low levels of the viral genetic material were found (viral RNA) consistent with either contamination from the owner or very low-grade infection. There are no tests so far that have shown whole viruses capable of transmitting to others."

"Dogs and cats have their own specific coronaviruses which they don't share with us and have never been reported previously with human coronaviruses such as those causing the common cold or during the SARS outbreak in 2003," said Professor Norris.

Dr Mark Lawrie, CEO of University Veterinary Teaching Hospital Sydney, shared some tips for owners of pets:

1. Relax. Worry and stress can suppress immunity and increase infection risk
 - a. Spending time with your dog or cat can decrease anxiety
 - b. You're way more likely to catch something from a human than a pet
2. Keep your pet healthy by worming, vaccinating, feeding wisely and seeing your vet regularly (every 6-12 months), or if unwell.
3. It's best to not let your pet lick your face (who knows where that tongue has recently been)
4. Wash hands between patting your pet, eating, or touching your face

Professor Jacqui Norris, Veterinary Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
Dr Mark Lawrie, CEO of University Veterinary Teaching Hospital Sydney