

Pet dog confirmed to have coronavirus

By Josh Loeb

DOGS can become infected with the new coronavirus, known as Covid-19, international veterinary authorities confirmed this week.

Late on Wednesday night, the BVA confirmed that a Pomeranian dog in Hong Kong that repeatedly tested positive for the virus had a low level of infection.

Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) had agreed that 'it is likely to be a case of human-to-animal transmission'.

At the time of going to press, it was understood that Defra had also confirmed this.

BVA president Daniella Dos Santos said: 'The OIE and Hong Kong government have unanimously agreed that the ongoing test results of the Pomeranian dog suggest that the dog has a low-level of infection and that this is likely to be a case of human-to-animal transmission. The dog has not shown any clinical signs of disease and is still under quarantine.'

'We are very wary of speculating beyond the information that is

available at the time of commenting. However, we're aware that during the SARS outbreak in 2003, a small number of cats and dogs tested positive for the virus. These animals did not transmit the virus to other animals of the same species or to humans.

'We are particularly keen not to cause any unnecessary concern that could lead to pet abandonment.

We would emphasise that at the moment, there remains no evidence that pet animals can be a source of infection of Covid-19 for humans or other animals, or that they become sick. The main source of infection remains human-to-human transmission.'

The development came after Jonathan Ball, professor of molecular virology at the University of Nottingham, suggested earlier in the week that it amounted to 'hysteria' to suggest that dogs could become infected with the virus.

This week the government unveiled an action plan to deal with a possible major coronavirus outbreak, following a meeting of its emergency Cobra committee. The plan includes a range of measures that could be introduced depending on the severity



TPG via ZUMA Press

A pet dog goes out for a walk wearing a mask in Hefei, China

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Our advice to vets is to follow Public Health England and NHS advice and guidance

of the outbreak, including ending big public gatherings.

There was some doubt over whether The Kennel Club would cancel Crufts 2020 but last week it confirmed the event would be going ahead as planned.

Its spokesperson said: 'Public Health England has not advised us to cancel the event. We are looking forward to welcoming our exhibitors and visitors as usual. However, this does remain an evolving situation and we will continue to adhere to the best available advice.'

On Tuesday the RCVS announced that it was postponing its president's reception party 'in line with the containment phase of the UK government's strategy to tackle the emerging outbreak in this country.'