

Detection of low level of COVID-19 virus in pet dog

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (February 28) that a pet dog had been tested weak positive to COVID-19 virus.

The AFCD received a referral from the Department of Health on February 26 that a dog of a patient infected with COVID-19 disease virus will be handed over to the AFCD. Staff of the AFCD picked up the dog from a residential flat at Tai Hang in the evening on the same day and sent the dog to the animal keeping facility at the Hong Kong Port of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. Oral, nasal and rectal samples were collected for testing of COVID-19 virus. The nasal and oral cavity samples were tested weak positive to COVID-19 virus. The dog does not have any relevant symptoms.

The above dog is the only dog under quarantine at animal keeping facility at the Hong Kong Port of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge at the moment. There are no other animals using the said facility. Staff of the department will step up cleansing and disinfection of the animal keeping facility.

At present, the AFCD does not have evidence that pet animals can be infected with COVID-19 virus or can be a source of infection to people. The Department will conduct close monitoring of the above dog and collect further samples for testing to confirm if the dog has really been infected with the virus or this is a result of environmental contamination of the dog's mouth and nose. Repeated tests will be conducted for the dog and it will only be returned when the test result is negative.

The spokesman said that to ensure public and animal health, the department strongly advise mammalian pets of patients confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19 virus to be put under quarantine by the AFCD. The pets will be delivered to the designated animal keeping facilities of the AFCD for quarantine and veterinary surveillance for 14 days. Samples will be collected for testing of COVID-19 virus as appropriate.

The spokesman reminded the pet owners to maintain a good habit of hygiene, and wash their hands thoroughly with soap or alcohol sanitiser after contacting pets. Pet owners shall wear masks while going out. If there are any changes in the health condition of the pets, advice from veterinarians should be sought as soon as possible.