

## Coronavirus Covid-19 FAQs

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## CANCELLATION OF FEI EVENTS

### **As an Organiser, am I obliged to cancel my event?**

While the FEI does not itself organise any FEI Events, in light of the escalating numbers of persons affected by the virus and the restrictions imposed by national governments, the FEI strongly recommends that Organisers in countries affected by Covid-19 cancel all Events until a reassessment of the situation can be made.

Please see [NF News](#) dated 13 March 2020.

### **Will spectators who purchased tickets for the FEI World Cup™ Finals in Las Vegas be reimbursed now the event has been cancelled?**

Yes, all ticket holders and exhibitors will be issued full refunds. The Las Vegas Events ticket office will contact all ticket holders on the reimbursement process.

### **Are Athletes reimbursed if an Event is cancelled?**

For Athlete reimbursement of entry fees for cancelled events please contact the Organising Committee of the event concerned.

### **What is the status of Events on the FEI Calendar? Will more Events be postponed or cancelled?**

Any decision on the cancellation of international Events remains with the Organising Committee and the National Federation in accordance with the national law applicable in each country. However, the FEI strongly recommends that Organisers in countries that are affected by Covid-19 cancel all Events until a reassessment of the situation can be made.

A list of cancelled events can be found [here](#).

### **Are Calendar fees reimbursed by the FEI for cancelled Events?**

The FEI has decided that Calendar fees for Events that have had to be cancelled because of Covid-19 will be waived. Clearly where an Event is cancelled, no organising dues or MCP contributions will be applicable.

### **Is it possible for an Organiser who is postponing an Event to “reserve” a future date?**

Currently, our Regulations do not allow dates to be reserved. We are not going to accept any date changes for the moment as we need to receive all the requests first.

The FEI does not know how many Events will be impacted nor how long the current situation will last. We understand how extremely difficult the situation is for Organisers, but clearly no single Organiser can be favoured to the detriment of others.

For this reason, and in order to evaluate the impact on the FEI Calendar, the FEI requests that for all Events that have been cancelled due to Covid-19, the National Federations inform the FEI whether they wish to organise their Event(s) on another date and, if so, provide the dates to [Calendar@fei.org](mailto:Calendar@fei.org) no later than **31 March**.

As the situation is evolving so rapidly, for Events that need to be cancelled after the 31 March deadline, National Federations are also asked to confirm whether they wish to propose a new date.

This will allow the FEI, in consultation with the International Equestrian Organisers Alliance and the relevant National Federations, to evaluate the impact of the new dates on the Calendar and propose a policy to the FEI Board for date changes.

## **TOKYO 2020 AND FEI CHAMPIONSHIPS – Updated 25 March**

### **Are the Olympic and Paralympic qualifiers impacted by Covid-19?**

No, all qualifiers for the [Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games](#) in the three Equestrian disciplines, Jumping, Dressage and Eventing, and all qualifiers for the [Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games](#), have already taken place and all the quota places have been filled accordingly.

### **With the Olympic and Paralympic Games postponed to 2021, will there be changes to the MERs for Tokyo and will a new date be set for registration of ownership for Olympic horses?**

In simple terms, the postponement of the Games means that there will need to be an extension of a number of deadlines. Over the coming weeks, the FEI will look at all dates related to both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, including Minimum Eligibility Requirements and the rule on horse ownership.

### **How does the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo impact on FEI Championships?**

The FEI is creating a series of discipline-specific task forces to evaluate the impact on the FEI Calendar of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in multiple Event cancellations, and also the how the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will impact the FEI Calendar in 2021. Please refer to the press release [here](#).

### **How does the postponement of Tokyo 2020 impact on the FEI Nations Cup™ and FEI World Cup™ series?**

The FEI is creating a series of discipline-specific task forces to evaluate the impact on the FEI Calendar of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in multiple Event cancellations, and also the how the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will impact the FEI Calendar in 2021. Please refer to the press release [here](#).

### **Will there be changes to the qualification process and selection for FEI Championships?**

While clearly the FEI has no say in the selection process for national representation, the cancellation of Events that serve as qualifiers for FEI Championships across all disciplines and age groups is of course a concern. The FEI is looking at the cut-off dates for Certificates of Capability and has asked the individual discipline Technical Committees to review this process and come up with recommendations for potential solutions.

We will of course advise our community of any changes to the qualification requirements for FEI Championships.

## **RANKINGS**

### **What is the status for the Rankings of all FEI Disciplines?**

The FEI is reviewing, together with the relevant stakeholders, what measures can be taken to limit the impact of event cancellations on Ranking points.

It is clear that we need to be fair to our Athletes and maintain a level playing field for them all and, with that in mind, we are discussing the possibility of prolonging the period for which Ranking points remain valid as one potential solution so that our athletes do not lose points during the period that Events are cancelled.

## **FEI OFFICIALS**

### **Are FEI Officials obliged to travel to events where they are appointed?**

In light of the global concerns about the spread of the virus as well as the increasing number of travel restrictions being enforced by national governments, the FEI has strongly recommended that all international events should be cancelled. However, if an OC decides to maintain its Event, the following applies:

FEI Officials appointed to FEI Events have the option not to travel or may be unable to travel. If the Official has been appointed by the FEI, they are required to inform the FEI that they are cancelling their appointment, following which the relevant Sport Department will, where possible, seek a replacement.

If the Official is appointed by the Organising Committee or National Federation, in the first instance it is up to the OC/NF to find a replacement, but you can contact the FEI in case you need support.

### **Are FEI Officials covered by the FEI travel insurance policy?**

Official Veterinarians and Testing Technicians that are appointed directly by, and travelling on behalf of the FEI – Testing Veterinarians, Testing Technicians, Examining Veterinarians and Measuring Veterinarians - are covered by the FEI travel insurance.

All other Officials will need to contact the relevant Organising Committee directly.

### **Who is responsible for the reimbursement of Officials for any costs incurred due to the cancellation of an event?**

FEI appointed Officials will be reimbursed by the FEI for any costs already incurred prior to the cancellation of an event.

Officials appointed by the Organising Committee will be reimbursed by the Organising Committee for any costs and should contact them directly.

### **How will the education system for FEI Officials work under the current circumstances?**

All Officials from Group A who have attended an in-person course in 2017, 2018 or 2019 have the opportunity to complete the Competency Evaluation System (CES) assessment online prior to officiating.

All Officials from Group B who attended their last in-person course in 2016 or earlier, are allowed to officiate throughout the year and have until mid-December 2020 to complete an in-person course. This deadline will remain in place until further notice.

The situation is being continuously assessed and any necessary changes will be communicated.

The FEI currently recommends that all Organisers of FEI Officials' courses postpone their courses to the second half of the year rather than cancelling them.

## **WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY (WADA) Q&A – New 24 March 2020**

The following Covid-19: Athlete Q&A was developed by WADA in consultation with its [Athlete Committee](#). It addresses specific questions that you as athletes may have regarding human anti-doping during the current challenging and rapidly evolving situation. This is a follow-up to the guidance provided to Anti-Doping Organisations (ADOs) on 20 March 2020, [Covid-19: ADO Guidance](#).

### **Can I still be tested during the Covid-19 pandemic given the many restrictions in place, especially as it relates to social distancing and self-isolation?**

Yes. Where no mobility or physical contact restrictions have been put in place by local authorities, testing may still occur anytime and anywhere.

### **If I am tested, what will be done to minimise the chances of infection?**

If a testing program can continue, ADOs need to put enhanced measures in place, consistent with the recommendations from health care authorities, to protect your health and that of sample collection personnel. More information can be found in WADA's [Covid-19 ADO: Guidance](#) document.

### **What specific measures will ADOs take to minimise the chances of transmission?**

Firstly, ADOs have been advised to conduct only the most critical doping controls. When conducting these tests, sample collection personnel must wash their hands regularly, and sanitise their hands or put on new gloves upon arriving at the testing location. Athletes and sample collection personnel must also, as far as possible, maintain the recommended social distance (two metres).

### **What should I do if I have symptoms that indicate I may have Covid-19?**

You should prioritise your health and the health of those around you. If you are concerned that you may have contracted the virus, the priority is to self-isolate and follow other precautions (hand washing, etc.) as recommended by international health organisations. You should also contact your local health authorities to ensure that you are following proper procedures in your region. In an anti-doping context, you should advise your ADO of your situation with your whereabouts submission or when doping control personnel notify you for testing so that they can adjust their plans accordingly.

### **Do I still need a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) if I have a medical condition requiring a prohibited substance or method?**

As long as you remain subject to testing, you remain responsible for ensuring you have a valid TUE. If you have difficulty accessing a physician during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to access the necessary documentation to support your TUE application, you should document all actions and impediments to comply with the relevant requirements, and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **If athletes are not being tested regularly or less than usual, what is WADA doing to ensure clean competition when the situation returns to normal?**

WADA is closely monitoring where levels of testing have been reduced or cancelled altogether. When the sporting landscape returns to normal, these 'gaps' in testing may be addressed through additional targeted testing.

### **Do I still need to provide my whereabouts information?**

Unless your ADO tells you otherwise, you should continue to provide whereabouts information as you remain subject to testing. If you wish to share information about your health, self-isolation, mobility restrictions, etc. which may impact doping controls, please share this information with your whereabouts submission.

**Can I refuse to be tested if I am self-isolating, in quarantine, or do not feel that adequate precautions are being taken by sample collection personnel?**

No. Unless there is a mandatory isolation/lockdown, you are advised to comply with testing while following the preventative measures put in place by your ADO. If you refuse to be tested or if you do not complete the sample collection process after notification, or if you are not able (or willing) to provide a sample due to a lack of protective measures, your refusal will follow the normal results management process which affords you due process and the opportunity to justify your action.

Keeping in mind that little testing is taking place, where appropriate, athletes are encouraged to comply with testing. If you rely on the assistance of a representative to assist with the doping control process (especially for minors or athletes with an impairment), and a representative is unavailable due to the impact of Covid-19, this too should be taken into account in the results management process.

**With reduction in testing, how can I have confidence in the future that I will be competing in a doping-free environment?**

Placing public health above the needs of the anti-doping system means that there will be impacts on the fight against doping in sport. However, there is significantly less training being carried out and significantly fewer competitions taking place. It is also important for athletes to remember that doping control samples continue to be stored for future analysis and that with the Athlete Biological Passport, some samples collected post-Covid-19 may reveal indications of doping that occurred during the period.

Finally, while testing may be reduced worldwide during this period, you can contribute to anti-doping efforts by ensuring you are up to date on the latest information and education and encourage your peers and team-mates to do the same. You can familiarise yourself with WADA's anti-doping education resources by visiting the Agency's anti-doping education e-learning platform, [AdEL](#).

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Where can FEI Athletes, Organisers, National Federations and Stakeholders find general information about Covid-19?**

We as a community have to make our contribution to limit the spread of this virus, as the sooner it can be contained the sooner we will be able to get back to normal life and normal sport. And this is something that every other sport is doing.

It is our collective responsibility to remain fully informed through our own national health authorities and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

There is lots of information available on the [WHO website](#) and the FEI will also keep you regularly updated. For convenience, we have copied the WHO Q&A below.

## **WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) Q&A ON CORONAVIRUSES (COVID-19)**

**What is a Coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

### **What is Covid-19?**

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

### **What are the symptoms of Covid-19?**

The most common symptoms of Covid-19 are fever, tiredness and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around one out of every six people who gets Covid-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

### **How does Covid-19 spread?**

People can catch Covid-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with Covid-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch Covid-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch Covid-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with Covid-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than one metre (3ft) away from a person who is sick. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways Covid-19 is spread and will continue to share updated findings.

### **Can the virus that causes Covid-19 be transmitted through the air?**

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes Covid-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. See previous answer on "How does Covid-19 spread?"

### **Can Covid-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?**

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching Covid-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with Covid-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch Covid-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the period of transmission of Covid-19 and will continue to share updated findings.

### **Can I catch Covid-19 from the faeces of someone with the disease?**

The risk of catching Covid-19 from the faeces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in faeces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways Covid-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings. Because this is a risk, however, it is another reason to clean hands regularly, after using the bathroom and before eating.

### **What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?**

#### Protection measures for everyone

Stay aware of the latest information on the Covid-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. Many countries around the world have seen cases of Covid-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some



other countries have succeeded in slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable, so check regularly for the latest news.

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading Covid-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.  
Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain at least one metre (3ft) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.  
Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the Covid-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.  
Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.  
Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.  
Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- Keep up to date on the latest Covid-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where Covid-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid travelling to these places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.  
Why? You have a higher chance of catching Covid-19 in one of these areas.

#### Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where Covid-19 is spreading

- Follow the guidance outlined above (Protection measures for everyone)
- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.  
Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible Covid-19 and other viruses.
- If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travellers.  
Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of Covid-19 and other viruses.

#### **How likely am I to catch Covid-19?**

The risk depends on where you are and, more specifically, whether there is a Covid-19 outbreak unfolding there.

For most people in most locations the risk of catching Covid-19 is still low. However, there are now places around the world (cities or areas) where the disease is spreading. For people living in, or visiting, these areas the risk of catching Covid-19 is higher. Governments and health authorities are taking vigorous action every time a new case of Covid-19 is identified. Be sure to comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings. Cooperating with disease control efforts will reduce your risk of catching or spreading Covid-19.

Covid-19 outbreaks can be contained and transmission stopped, as has been shown in China and some other countries. Unfortunately, new outbreaks can emerge rapidly. It's important to be aware of the situation where you are or intend to go. WHO publishes daily updates on the Covid-19 situation worldwide. You can see these at:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

### **Should I worry about Covid-19?**

Illness due to Covid-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about one in every five people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the Covid-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones.

We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. First and foremost among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

Learn more about how to protect yourself at:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

### **Who is at risk of developing severe illness?**

While we are still learning about how Covid-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

### **Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the Covid-19?**

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. Covid-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of Covid-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

### **Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure Covid-19?**

While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of Covid-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for Covid-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings are available.

### **Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for Covid-19?**

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat Covid-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalised. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation. They are being tested through clinical trials. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat Covid-19.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against Covid-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of your elbow or a tissue, and maintain a distance of at least one metre (3ft) from people who are coughing or sneezing. (See [Basic protective measures against the new coronavirus](#)).

### **Is Covid-19 the same as SARS?**

No. The virus that causes Covid-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different.

SARS was more deadly but much less infectious than Covid-19. There have been no outbreaks of SARS anywhere in the world since 2003.

### **Should I wear a mask to protect myself?**

Only wear a mask if you are ill with Covid-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have Covid-19. Disposable face masks can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a worldwide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.

WHO advises rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and misuse of masks ([see Advice on the use of masks](#)).

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against Covid-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of your elbow or a tissue, and maintain a distance of at least one metre (3ft) from people who are coughing or sneezing. (See [Basic protective measures against the new coronavirus](#)).

### **How do I put on, use, take off and dispose of a mask?**

1. Remember, a mask should only be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with respiratory symptoms, such as fever and cough.
2. Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
3. Take the mask and inspect it for tears or holes.
4. Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip is).
5. Ensure the proper side of the mask faces outwards (the coloured side).
6. Place the mask to your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
7. Pull down the mask's bottom so it covers your mouth and your chin.
8. After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes, to avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
9. Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
10. Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask – use alcohol-based hand rub or, if visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

### **How long is the incubation period for Covid-19?**

The "incubation period" means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for Covid-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

### **Can humans become infected with the Covid-19 from an animal source?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in animals. Occasionally people get infected with these viruses which may then spread to other people. For example, SARS-CoV was associated with civet cats and MERS-CoV is transmitted by dromedary camels. Possible animal sources of Covid-19 have not yet been confirmed.

To protect yourself, such as when visiting live animal markets, avoid direct contact with animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Ensure good food safety practices at all times. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid contamination of uncooked foods and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

### **Can I catch Covid-19 from my pet?**

No. There is no evidence that companion animals or pets such as cats and dogs have been infected or could spread the virus that causes Covid-19.

### **How long does the virus survive on surfaces?**

It is not certain how long the virus that causes Covid-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the Covid-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

### **Is it safe to receive a package from any area where Covid-19 has been reported?**

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes Covid-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

### **Is there anything I should not do?**

The following measures are NOT effective against Covid-2019 and can be harmful:

- Smoking
- Wearing multiple masks
- Taking antibiotics (See question 10 "Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure Covid-19?")

In any case, if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early to reduce the risk of developing a more severe infection and be sure to share your recent travel history with your health care provider.

Stay up to date with the [latest information](#) and [international travel and health](#) on the WHO website.

## **WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE) Q&A – New 25 March 2020**

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide, has created a Q&A on Covid-19 in response to multiple queries about animals and the virus.

### **Can humans transmit Covid-19 virus to animals?**

Now that Covid-19 virus infections are widely distributed in the human population there is a possibility for some animals to become infected through close contact with infected humans.

Studies are underway to better understand the susceptibility of different animal species to the Covid-19 virus and to assess infection dynamics in susceptible animal species.

Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that animals infected by humans are playing a role in the spread of Covid-19. Human outbreaks are driven by person-to-person contact.

### **What do we know about Covid-19 virus and companion animals?**

The current spread of Covid-19 is a result of human-to-human transmission. To date, there is no evidence that companion animals spread the disease. Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals which may compromise their welfare.

The Veterinary Services of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China reported to OIE evidence that two dogs have been infected with the Covid-19 virus following close exposure to owners who were sick with Covid-19 – see [Immediate Notification](#) (01/03/2020), [Follow-up report no.1](#) (09/03/2020), [Follow-up report no. 2](#) (16/03/2020) and [Follow-up report no. 3](#) (23/03/2020). The test, conducted by real time PCR, showed the presence of genetic material from the Covid-19 virus. The dogs were not showing any clinical signs of the disease.

There is no evidence that dogs play a role in the spread of this human disease or that they become sick. Further studies are underway to understand if and how different animals could be affected by Covid-19 virus. The OIE will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

### **What precautionary measures should be taken by owners when companion or other animals have close contact with humans who are sick or suspected of having Covid-19?**

There have not been any reports of companion or other animals presenting clinical signs caused by Covid-19 virus infection and currently there is no evidence that they play a significant epidemiological role in this human disease. However, because animals and people can sometimes share diseases (known as zoonotic diseases), it is still recommended that people who are sick with Covid-19 limit contact with companion and other animals until more information is known about the virus.

When handling and caring for animals, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented. This includes hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing, licking or sharing food.

When possible, people who are sick or under medical attention for Covid-19 should avoid close contact with their pets and have another member of their household care for their animals. If they must look after their pet, they should maintain good hygiene practices and wear a face mask if possible.

### **Are there any precautions to take with live animals or animal products?**

Although there is uncertainty about the origin of the Covid-19 virus, in accordance with advice offered by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), as a general precaution, when visiting live animal markets, wet markets or animal product markets, general hygiene measures should be applied. These include regular hand washing with soap and potable water after touching animals and animal products, as well as avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth, and avoiding contact with sick animals or spoiled animal products. Any contact with other animals possibly living in the market (e.g., stray cats and dogs, rodents, birds, bats) should be avoided. Precaution should be taken to avoid contact with animal waste or fluids on the soil or surfaces of shops and market facilities.

As per general good food safety practices, raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care to avoid potential cross-contamination with uncooked foods. Meat from healthy livestock that is prepared and served in accordance with good hygiene and food safety principles remains safe to eat. Further recommendations from WHO can be consulted [here](#).

Based on currently available information, trade restrictions on animals or animal products are not recommended. Similarly, precautions for packaging materials are unnecessary over and above the observation of basic hygiene, such as ensuring it is clean and free of visible contamination.

### **What are the Veterinary Authority's international responsibilities in this event?**

The detection of Covid-19 virus in animals meets the criteria for reporting to the OIE through WAHIS, in accordance with the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* as an emerging disease

Therefore, any detection of the Covid-19 virus in an animal (including information about the species, diagnostic tests, and relevant epidemiological information) should be reported to the OIE.

It is important for Veterinary Authorities to remain informed and maintain close liaison with public health authorities and those responsible for wildlife to ensure coherent and appropriate risk communication messages and risk management.

It is important that Covid-19 does not lead to inappropriate measures being taken against domestic or wild animals which might compromise their welfare and health or have a negative impact on biodiversity.

In some countries, National Veterinary Services are supporting core functions of the public health response, such as screening and testing of surveillance and diagnostic samples from humans. Veterinary clinics in some countries are also supporting the public health response by donating essential materials such as personal protective equipment and ventilators.

### **What is the OIE doing?**

The OIE is in contact with its Regional Representation in Asia and The Pacific, OIE Delegates of Member Countries, the OIE Wildlife Working Group, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO, to gather and share the latest available information. The OIE is closely liaising with its network of experts involved in current investigations on the source of the disease. Rumours and unofficial information are also monitored daily.

The OIE has mobilised an informal advisory group on Covid-19. The group, which includes world leading scientists and researchers, meets on a regular basis to share the latest information on research and disease events at the human-animal interface.

Given the similarities between Covid-19 and the emergence of other human infectious diseases at the human animal interface, the OIE is working with its Wildlife Working Group and other partners to develop a longer term work programme which aims to better understand the dynamics and risks around wildlife trade and consumption, with a view to developing strategies to reduce the risk of future spill over events.