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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 UPDATE (35): ANIMAL, SOUTH KOREA (SOUTH GYEONGSANG) CAT

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A ProMED-mail post

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[http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/980276.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/980276.html)

South Korea has reported its 1st case of a pet testing positive for the coronavirus.

The government plans to have the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and disease control authorities draw up guidelines for pets, but officials don't think that people are likely to catch the coronavirus from their pets.

"The disease control authorities confirmed that a pet was infected with the coronavirus during an epidemiological study of a recent infection cluster," Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said during a COVID-19 meeting of the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasure Headquarters. The meeting was held at the Central Government Complex in Seoul on [24 Jan 2021].

"Since this may worry and disturb many people who regard their pets as family members and spend a lot of time with them on a daily basis, we'll be taking measures to alleviate any anxiety. The disease control authorities will be scientifically assessing the possibility of the coronavirus being transmitted between people and animals and will be transparent about publishing the results of that assessment. MAFRA will also be consulting with the disease control authorities to draw up guidelines for handling pets," Chung went on to say.

The infected pet to which Chung referred is a cat that belongs to an individual infected at the International House of Prayer in Jinju, South Gyeongsang Province. That facility is the epicenter of a cluster at which 108 people were infected, as of late on 23 Jan 2021. The cat tested positive while being moved to a pet hotel after its owner was infected.

The cat was tested for the coronavirus in the same way that people are: swabs from deep in the nose and deep in the mouth were run through a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay.

"There are a few examples around the world of pets being apparently infected [with the coronavirus] by people, but as of yet, there haven't been any examples of the opposite situation -- of people being infected by pets," the head of the social strategy

team at the Central Disaster Management Headquarters said during a daily briefing on [24 Jan 2021].

"The disease control authorities are currently collecting more data from overseas as they investigate the impact of examples of pet infections occurring in the country."

[Byline: Seon Dam-eun]

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[A recently published update on possible animal sources for human COVID-19 included the following information addressing cats and dogs (ref 1, chapter 4.1):

"Today pets often live in close contact with humans and are commonly considered part of the family. It comes as no surprise that SARS-CoV-2 has been detected in dogs and cats living in COVID-19 households. Often SARS-CoV-2 in cats or dogs was only detected by PCR assays, occasionally the pet in question seroconverted, and in only a few cases, mild clinical signs were described. Commonly, field assessments of the general cat and dog population using serology assays resulted in a low prevalence of antibody-positive animals. Overall, this has triggered a number of controlled experimental and observational studies.

"Experimental cat studies have been published [ref 1, Table 2: "Summary of research studies demonstrating SARS-CoV-2 in pets"] further confirming that cats often remain asymptomatic while able to transmit SARS-CoV-2 to sentinel cats. Moreover, it was also reported that cats shed the virus for approximately 5 days with peak titres achieved from nasal shedding at day 3 and, when infected with SARS-CoV-2 twice 4 weeks apart, mounted an effective immune response and did not become reinfected.

"In contrast, SARS-CoV-2 shedding in experimentally infected dogs was not observed; however, seroconversion was reported. The overall data provided by research into canine and feline SARS-CoV-2 infection indicates these are end-stage hosts. There is no evidence of virus transmission to other dogs, but cats can infect naïve cats during the acute stage of infection if in close contact with each other."

OIE's table "Events in animals" presenting all notified COVID-19 cases in animals, received -- so far -- from 23 countries, has been updated on 25 Jan 2021. Among several new pieces of information, we refer to the Netherlands' final report of 6 Jan 2021, addressing the Dutch mink epizootic (ref. DGA-DAD/20314491, available at [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/Netherlands\\_6\\_January\\_2021\\_to\\_OIE\\_update\\_situation\\_SARS-CoV-2\\_in\\_mink.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/Netherlands_6_January_2021_to_OIE_update_situation_SARS-CoV-2_in_mink.pdf)). The following information is selectively extracted from the said report:

"We have faced 69 infected mink farms and culled the mink on 70 farms in total.

"We are still carrying out research to get more insight in the sources of virus introduction. We also focus on the possible role of wildlife in the spread of the infection. A clear picture of routes of transmission can still not be provided, despite all the effort the scientists have put into this research.

"In December [2020] all mink on all remaining farms have been pelted, implying that no mink are kept on holdings in the Netherlands anymore. It is not allowed to keep mink in the Netherlands any more from [8 Jan 2021] onwards. This implies that no new infections of mink will occur and no letters with updates about this issue will be sent to the OIE."

Denmark, which suffered an extensive COVID-19 epizootic in mink and experienced significant changes in its disease control policy, submitted its last (6th) report on 5 Nov 2020; an update is anticipated.

China, the current world's leading mink producer, has not provided information on COVID-19-related research/surveillance in its mink farming industry. Such information is expected to be obtained by the WHO international experts team currently visiting

China, which includes several animal-health specialists.

Reference

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1. Opriessnig T, Huang YW. Third update on possible animal sources for human COVID-19. Xenotransplantation. 2021 Jan 21: e12671. doi: 10.1111/xen.12671. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 33476071; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/xen.12671> - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED map of South Korea: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=8138196,21619>

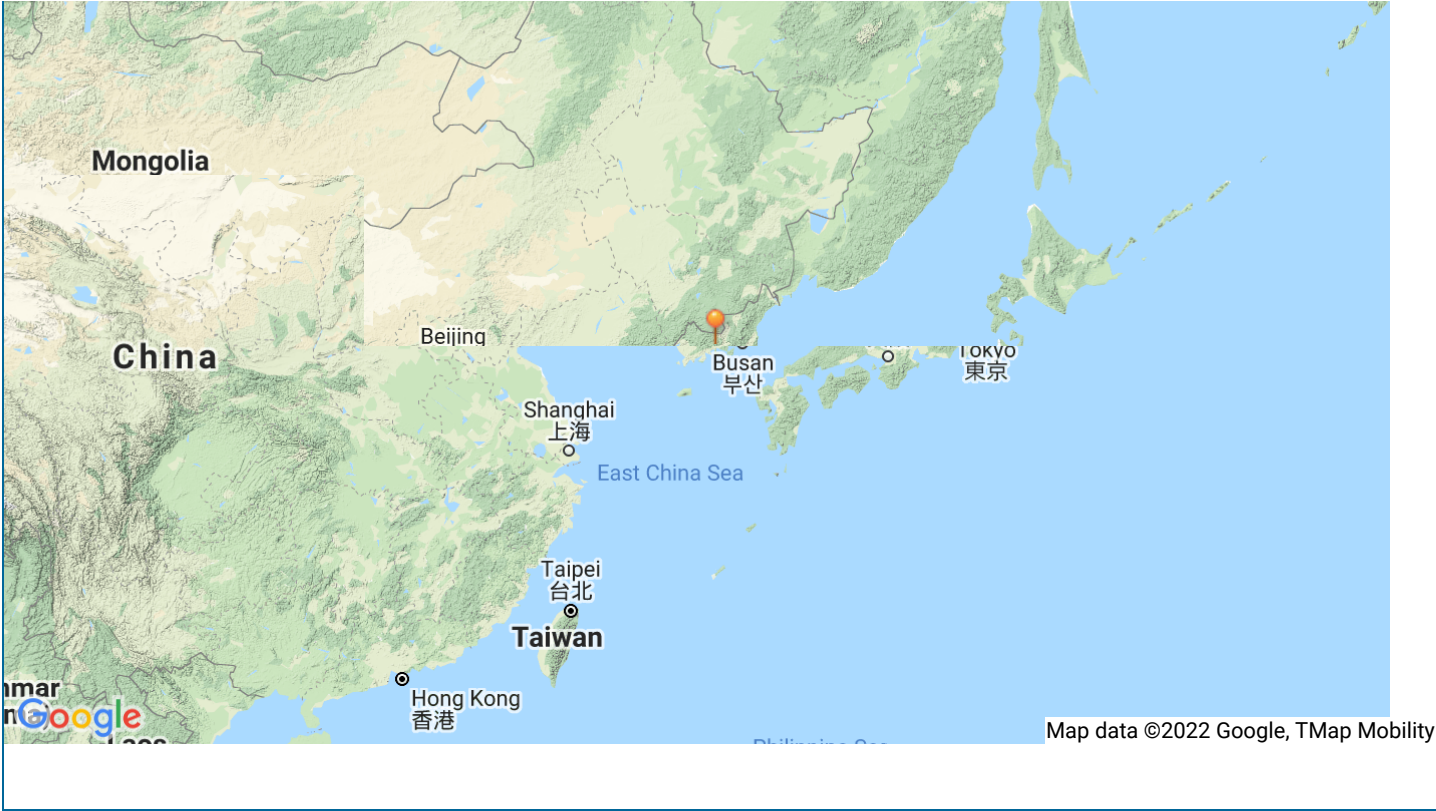
# See Also

COVID-19 update (22): animal, Russia (LN) St Petersburg, cat 20210117.8111937  
2020

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- COVID-19 update (552): USA, animal, cat, dog, snow leopard, OIE 20201223.8042405
- COVID-19 update (535): Denmark, animal, mink, zoonotic, cat, RFI 20201213.8015149
- COVID-19 update (519): Switzerland (ZH) animal, cat, OIE 20201204.7993204
- COVID-19 update (506): Argentina (BA, SE) animal, cat, dog, OIE 20201125.7972283
- COVID-19 update (495): animal, cat, transmission model 20201119.7954363
- COVID-19 update (463): Brazil (MT) animal, cat, OIE 20201031.7905784
- COVID-19 update (452): Chile (RM) animal, cat, OIE 20201023.7885452
- COVID-19 update (350): USA (TX) animal, cat 20200808.7658191
- COVID-19 update (345): animal, cat, research, experimental infection 20200805.7648370
- COVID-19 update (334): animal, Netherlands, mink, spread, UK, cat, 1st rep, OIE 20200727.7617582
- COVID-19 update (330): China (Hong Kong) animal, cat, OIE 20200724.7609215
- COVID-19 update (267): animal, domestic, wild, cat, research 20200617.7480013
- COVID-19 update (248): Netherlands (NB, LI) animal, mink, spread, culling, cat 20200609.7446478
- COVID-19 update (238): USA (MN) animal, cat 20200605.7429133
- COVID-19 update (227): animal, cat, dog, research, experimental infection 20200601.7416648
- COVID-19 update (212): Russia (Moskva) animal, cat, OIE 20200526.7379578
- COVID-19 update (209): Netherlands (NB) farmed mink, animal-to-human, cat, epid 20200525.7375359
- COVID-19 update (189): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, research, cat, dog 20200517.7344274
- COVID-19 update (183): Japan/USA, animal, research, cat, experimental infection 20200514.7337185
- COVID-19 update (181): Germany (BY), France (AC), cat, OIE animal case defin. 20200513.7332909
- COVID-19 update (177): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, Spain (CT) cat susp 20200512.7328587
- COVID-19 update (166): China (Hong Kong) animal, cat, OIE, resolved 20200508.7314521
- COVID-19 update (149): France (IF) animal, cat, owned 20200501.7289409
- COVID-19 update (124): USA (NY) animal, cat, lion, OIE 20200423.7259119
- COVID-19 update (123): USA (NY) animal, cat, conf. 20200422.7256272
- COVID-19 update (113): USA (NY) animal, cat, susp, RFI 20200418.7240811
- COVID-19 update (76): China (HU) animal, cat, owned, stray, seropositive 20200403.7179946
- COVID-19 update (75): China (Hong Kong) animal cat, OIE 20200403.7179945
- COVID-19 update (70): China (Hong Kong) animal, cat, pets & stock 20200402.7173286
- COVID-19 update (58): Belgium, animal, cat, clinical case, RFI 20200327.7151215

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