



The Hong Kong Veterinary Association Ltd

Press Release

1st December 2009

The veterinary clinic of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the China Agricultural University reported last Wednesday that two out of 52 samples from sick dogs tested positive for type A H1N1 influenza virus, the Ministry said late on Friday.

Analysis of genetic composition found the virus detected in the samples and those found on human A/H1N1 flu cases were 99 percent homologous, it said.

The Hong Kong Veterinary Association wishes to remind dog owners that some viruses can pass between people and dogs. The risk of dogs transmitting H1N1 to people is unclear. It is theoretically possible but so far evidence shows that the dogs were most likely to have contracted the H1N1 infection from their owners.

Considering the large number of infected people and the assumed large number of exposed dogs due to frequent interaction between the species, it can be presumed that dogs are minimally susceptible given the very low incidence of reported canine infections. **People should be aware but not worried about the potential for dogs to acquire H1N1. To date there are no reported cases of people having contracted H1N1 from a pet.**

Pet owners should monitor their pets' health very closely and visit a veterinarian if there are any signs of illness including but not limited to: coughing, sneezing, fever and lethargy. There are many other diseases that can produce similar signs to influenza in pets and clinical signs can be highly variable, ranging from almost none to very severe. People infected with H1N1 influenza should wear a mask and avoid contact with all individuals in the household as well as their pets to reduce the chance of spreading the disease.

Vaccination against canine influenza with the currently available canine vaccine will not provide any protection against H1N1.

The HKVA wishes to reinforce the importance of good hygiene practice at home, in pet shops and at pet playgrounds. This includes washing hands frequently and especially after/between handling animals, covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, keeping the environment clean and avoid visiting crowded or poorly-ventilated areas. It is vital that all dog owners clean up their pet's faeces straight away.

Whenever in doubt about your pet's health, please consult your veterinarian before making rushed decisions. HKVA believes that it is unjustifiable to abandon animals solely based on the fear of the H1N1 pandemic.

For more information, please refer to the HKVA website (www.hkva.org) or contact the HKVA at (secretary@hkva.org)