

Avoid contact with pet cat or dog if you have Covid

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Cat or dog owners who have Covid-19 should avoid their pets while infected, experts have said.



Scientists in the Netherlands found that coronavirus is common in pet cats and dogs where their owners have the disease.

While cases of owners passing on Covid-19 to their pets are considered to be of negligible risk to public health, the scientists say that there is a “potential risk” that domestic animals could act as a “reservoir” for coronavirus and reintroduce it to humans.

Els Broens from Utrecht University said: “If you have

Covid-19, you should avoid contact with your cat or dog, just as you would do with other people.

“The main concern, however, is not the animals’ health — they had no or mild symptoms of Covid-19 — but the potential risk that pets could act as a reservoir of the virus and reintroduce it into the human population.

“Fortunately, to date no pet-to-human transmission has been reported. So, despite the rather high prevalence among pets from Covid-19 positive households in this study, it seems unlikely that pets play a role in the pandemic.”

The research was presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.

Dr Broens and his colleagues analysed the PCR test results of 156 dogs and 154 cats from 196 households.

Six cats and seven dogs (4.2%) had positive PCR tests and 31 cats and 23 dogs (17.4%) tested positive for antibodies.

Eight cats and dogs that lived in the same homes as the PCR-positive pets were also tested for a second time to check for virus transmission among pets.

None of the animals tested positive, suggesting the virus was not being passed between pets living in close contact with one another.

However, the findings

show that Covid-19 is highly prevalent in pets of people who have had the disease.

Meanwhile, separate research, suggests that cats that sleep on their owner’s bed may be at particular risk of getting Covid-19 infection from their owners.

Dorothee Bienzle of the University of Guelph in Canada said: “If someone has Covid-19 there is a surprisingly high chance they will pass it on to their pet. Cats, especially those that sleep on their owner’s bed, seem to be particularly vulnerable.”