

PANORAMA

Thematic portfolio



Strengthening preparedness
and resilience to emergencies



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PERSPECTIVES

DOSSIER

AROUND THE WORLD

SARS-CoV-2 almost certainly emerged from an animal source [1] and, unsurprisingly, several mammalian species have been shown to be susceptible to the virus and to transmit it [2]. For example, the virus has begun to circulate in farmed mink. This, alongside other animal infection events and the response (sometimes disproportionate) to those events, impacts animal health and welfare, biodiversity, national economies and public health. There is also a real danger that new wild or domestic animal reservoirs of the virus could become established due to anthro-po-zoonotic introduction from humans. Considering these risks, it is important that the veterinary sector remain vigilant and active.

As early as January 2020, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) started to communicate on the implications of SARS-CoV-2 at the human–animal interface.

| SARS-CoV-2 infection in animals is reportable to the OIE

Since SARS-CoV-2 infection in animals is reportable to the OIE as an ‘emerging disease’, the OIE has been sharing the latest findings through a [dedicated web page](#). The OIE continues to provide guidance on research priorities in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) R&D Blueprint for COVID-19, which details surveillance and preventative measures to avoid further spillover from humans to animals and vice versa. The OIE’s advice aims to inform risk communication.

| The OIE has issued guidance and advice for veterinary diagnosticians, officials and practitioners

The success that some countries have had in flattening the epidemic curve was influenced by their ability to rapidly deploy mass testing of suspected human cases. In several of these countries, [veterinary laboratories played an important frontline role](#) in supporting their public health partners to meet the surge in demand by testing human samples. Veterinary laboratories are well set up to do this because they are used to ‘scaling up’ testing capacity for animal disease outbreaks. In collaboration with WHO, the OIE compiled lessons learned from veterinary laboratories involved in the public health response to COVID-19, and developed and disseminated guidance to help and encourage other veterinary laboratories to support the response [3]. Veterinary Services supported the public health response in other ways too; by providing much-needed equipment (when there were shortages), contributing epidemiology expertise, and facilitating inter-agency cooperation at border entry points. In addition to issuing guidance for veterinary laboratories, the OIE has issued advice for Veterinary Services and veterinary practitioners. This covers the sampling, testing and reporting of SARS-CoV-2 in animals [4] and considerations on the application of sanitary measures for international trade related to COVID-19 [5].

In the longer term, Veterinary Services must play a central role in reducing the risks of future pandemics by assessing the risks of disease emergence from animals, including wildlife, and managing those risks through better surveillance and regulation of high-risk practices, and enforcement. The OIE is developing an ambitious, transformative programme of work to reduce the risk of future pandemics from disease spillover events and aims to build a comprehensive wildlife health risk management core programme.

[OIE Web Portal on COVID-19](#)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.20506/bull.2020.2.3144>

PERSPECTIVES

► OIE ACTIONS

The OIE response to COVID-19

What does COVID-19 have to do with animal health? And what has the OIE been doing?

KEYWORDS

#COVID-19, #emergency management, #emerging pathogen, #emerging viral disease, #emerging zoonosis, #One Health, #World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

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5. World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) (2020). – [OIE considerations on the application of sanitary measures for international trade related to COVID-19](#).

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