

Pets with Covid-19 must be quarantined – researcher

KUALA LUMPUR: Pets owned by private individuals which have been confirmed positive for Covid-19 must be isolated and quarantined for 14 days for monitoring purposes.

Senior lecturer (veterinary immunology) and researcher in pet disease at the Faculty of Veterinary Science in Universiti Putra Malaysia, Dr Farina Mustaffa Kamal, said if these pets displayed any health issues during this period, their owners should consult the District Veterinary Services Department for further action.

She said although there was no evidence of pets spreading Covid-19 infections, they could themselves be infected by the disease as reported by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

“Four cases of Covid-19 infections involving pets (two cats and two dogs) contracted from their owners have been reported in Belgium and Hong Kong.

“These pets were suspected to have contracted the disease through close contact with Covid-19 positive persons through kisses, hugs or general management,” she told Bernama when contacted.

However, Dr Farina said, so far, the number of infected pets was very small and there was no clear information of the symptoms of animals infected with Covid-19, with the majority not displaying any signs.

“Only one cat in Belgium displayed symptoms of breathing

difficulties, diarrhea and vomiting. However, it must be remembered that other virus or bacteria can also cause these same symptoms in animals,” she said.

Dr Farina stressed that it was better for pet owners to impose early quarantine and isolation measures on their animals as soon as they realise that they had symptoms of Covid-19 infection.

She added that there was no clear evidence that certain species of animals were naturally more susceptible to infections, but said with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the pet owners are encouraged to isolate their animals in the house.

“So far, experimental studies show that the virus can infect cats, ferrets, and non-human primates,” she said, adding that ferrets and monkeys were the laboratory animals used in studies on coronavirus.

On stray animals, Dr Farina said it was difficult to check on stray cats as they were not used to human interaction.

“Logically-speaking, there is less close contact between humans and stray cats through kisses and hugs, but the recommendations by the OIE and the World Health Organisation must be observed when managing pets and stray animals,” she said.

Dr Farina said generally-speaking, coronavirus was a large family of virus which infected different species of animals.

– Bernama