June 29, 2022

Monkeypox is a Reportable Disease in BC Animals

Since May 2022, rising numbers of human cases of monkeypox have been observed in Canada, the USA and Europe. As of June 27, BC had 2 confirmed human cases of monkeypox[1].

Transmission of the virus between people has been observed in the current outbreak. Transmission from people to animals has not been identified in the outbreak, yet this is a concern with consequences for animal and public health.

The potential consequences of an animal becoming infected with monkeypox include:

- subsequent potential animal transmission to humans (rodent to human transmission has been recognized in African countries endemic with monkeypox);
- infected domestic animals, or their waste, transmit the virus to wildlife or other domestic animals;
- Canadian animal species becoming domestic reservoirs for the virus.

To mitigate these risks, **monkeypox in any animal species is deemed a reportable disease in BC** under sections 10(3)(a) and (b) of Appendix I of the BC Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation[2]. This includes the requirement to report any animal exposed to monkeypox, possibly infected with monkeypox or testing positive to monkeypox. Reports must be made within 24 hours to BC's Chief Veterinarian at chief.veterinarian@gov.bc.ca. Reports should include animal and owner identification, location and contact information, animal signalment, history, clinical signs, diagnostic results and any treatment, as per section 20(3) of the *Animal Health Act*[3].

The Chief Veterinarian will report any confirmed animal cases of monkeypox to BC public health agencies.

The evidence of monkeypox epidemiology in animals, including species susceptibility, method of transmission and clinical signs is limited and evolving.

Animals currently confirmed as susceptible to monkeypox infection include non-human primates, rodents (domestic and wild), rabbits, and squirrels. The full range of susceptible animals, particularly in North America, is unknown.

[1] Monkeypox (http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/monkeypox)
[2] https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/7_2015
[3] https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/14016

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Monkeypox virus has been found in skin lesions and most or all secretions and excretions (e.g., urine, feces, and oral, nasal and conjunctival exudates) in animals. Likely routes of transmission include inhalation, direct inoculation into breaks in the skin, and the ingestion of infected tissues.

Clinical signs of monkeypox in animals are variable and can be non-specific. For example, symptoms in rodents can include lethargy, anorexia and fever. They can also have symptoms associated with the GI, respiratory or integumentary systems. Asymptomatic infection has occurred in animal species including non-human primates and rodents.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food's primary monkeypox objective is to reduce the risk of animals being exposed to monkeypox. Having exposure of an animal to the virus be reportable permits the Ministry to follow up with human cases and encourage them to treat any animals as they would their human contacts. That is, for infected people to not have contact with animals and have another member of the household care for the animals. If this is not possible, infected people will be encouraged to use personal protective measures, like those used with human household contacts, to minimize the risk of virus transmission to the animal(s). Human cases will be encouraged to maintain their animals within the household during their recovery. Methods of disposing of pet feces that are more biosecure than landfilling are being explored. Human cases are not to have contact with any wildlife, livestock or poultry.

Exposed animals are to be monitored for clinical signs, and should any develop, the human case or household member is expected to initially make remote contact with their veterinarian to discuss veterinary care of the animals. The Ministry is available to support veterinary practitioners and their staff in the care (virtual or otherwise) of such exposed animals, including access to monkeypox testing if warranted. Development of a monkeypox test by Canadian animal health authorities is underway, and in the meantime, we have access to testing through public health.

This communication has been distributed to BC veterinarians via the CVBC and SBCV. Due to uncertainty in the susceptibility of animals to infection and any sequalae, coupled with the very low risk to animals owned by the general public, this information is not being made public at this time. Therefore, please do not distribute this document to your clients or post it publicly, to prevent causing undue concern, misunderstanding about the current very low risk to the public or their animals, and any reaction that could lead to animal welfare risks for domestic or wild animals in BC.

The Chief Veterinarian's Office appreciates the co-operation of BC's veterinarians and their staff during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and is requesting similar co-operation with monkeypox. For more information on monkeypox in animals please contact Brian Radke, Public Health Veterinarian, brian.radke@gov.bc.ca, 778-666-0544.