Terms of reference
In the context of the pandemic spread of SARS-CoV2 coronavirus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome CoronaVirus2, etiological agent of Covid-19) and in view of recent detections using the RT-PCR diagnostic method of two dogs and one cat found positive for SARS-CoV2 virus and which were in close contact with infected human patients, the following question is addressed to the Scientific Committee: what is the zoonotic risk of pets for transmitting infection from animals to man and from man to animals?

On 26/02/2020 a dog was diagnosed positive for the SARS-CoV2 virus with RT-PCR in Hong Kong. On 18/03/2020 a second dog, still in Hong Kong, was diagnosed positive. Also, on 18/03/2020, the FASFC was informed by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Liège that viral RNA of the SARS-CoV2 virus was detected in the feces and vomit of a cat with digestive and respiratory symptoms. The cat was owned by a person infected with SARS-CoV2 virus. The presence of SARS-CoV2 virus was confirmed by PCR (high throughput sequencing).

At the request of the Scientific Committee Corona virus, which is responsible for the risk assessment and risk management of SARS-CoV2 virus (Covid-19) together with the Risk Assessment Group and the Risk Management Group for the Belgian Federal State, and which was informed in advance by the FASFC, the risk manager of the FASFC asked the SciCom for urgent advice on the risk of contamination of pets (dogs and cats) by man and, vice versa, of man by pets

Method
This risk assessment was carried out as a matter of urgency based on expert opinion. A systematic literature review and an uncertainty analysis could not be carried out within the set time frame. The risk assessment is qualitative and based on the Risk Assessment Methodology for Animal Diseases of the Scientific Committee (SciCom, 2017).

Conclusion
The Scientific Committee took note of the reported suspected cases of detection of SARS-CoV2 virus in domestic animals (2 dogs in Hong Kong and 1 cat in Belgium). On the basis of the elements provided, the Scientific Committee considers the risk of contamination of animals by man to be low but recommends that the veterinary services remain more vigilant and encourage epidemiological investigations in possible new suspect cases. With regard to the risk of infection of man from animals, the Scientific Committee is not in a position, on the basis of current data, to assess the risk. However, the Committee considers that this risk is negligible compared to the risk of human-to-human transmission.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.