

# COVID-19 COULD EVOLVE IN ANIMALS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Biotechnology, Genetics & Health related developments

The role of “animal reservoirs” in the spread of COVID-19 is still being studied but evidence of zoonosis, or the virus jumping from animals to humans, is growing and scientists are concerned that this new frontier could potentially spawn dangerous, and difficult to monitor mutants.

Some experts supported the theory that the highly mutated Omicron variant, which caused a deluge of cases globally, including India, emerged from animals, potentially rodents, rather than an immune-compromised human.

“As the virus multiplies in infected hosts, it can mutate slightly, and the worry is that over time, minor genomic tweaks in hundreds or thousands, if not millions, of animals, could eventually add up to changes that make the virus more contagious or deadlier in people, or able to evade treatments and vaccines,” US-based public health expert Amita Gupta told *PTI*.

Although the number of people infected with coronavirus variants evolved in animals has not been quantified yet, the evidence of zoonosis is growing.

Last week, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that at least four people in Michigan, U.S., were infected with a version of the coronavirus observed mostly in minks during the first year of the pandemic.

Flagging the concern, the World Health Organization (WHO) last month said the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 to wildlife could result in the establishment of animal reservoirs of the virus.

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