



Interim Veterinary Guidance on Companion Animal Coronavirus Testing in Texas

Note: The scientific name of the new strain of coronavirus is SARS-CoV-2. In people, the disease caused by the virus is commonly referred to as COVID-19. Because we are addressing the virus itself in the context of animal health, we refer to it as SARS-CoV-2.

KEY POINTS

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not know the exact source of the current outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person to person.
- The CDC is not aware of any companion animals (i.e. household cats and dogs) in the United States infected with SARS-CoV-2. The first case of an animal testing positive for the virus in the United States was a tiger that had a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. The CDC is aware of a very small number of pets outside the United States reported to be infected with the virus after close contact with people with COVID-19.
- The CDC does not have evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread SARS-CoV-2.
- The CDC does not have evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading SARS-CoV-2 in the United States.
- Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by SARS-CoV-2.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies are exceptionally limited and are being prioritized for human testing and medical care.

WILL ANIMALS BE TESTED FOR CORONAVIRUS?

At this time, general animal testing for SARS-CoV-2 is not recommended.

Because the situation is ever-evolving, the Department of State Health Service (DSHS) State Public Health Veterinarian and the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) State Veterinarian may decide and authorize, out of an abundance of caution, to test certain animals.

CRITERIA TO REQUEST TESTING

Only animals exhibiting clinical signs of illness compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infection, including respiratory symptoms, will be considered for testing.

Veterinarians requesting SARS-CoV-2 for an animal must have first performed a thorough and systematic diagnostic evaluation with appropriate testing to rule out common causes based on the patient's clinical signs.

At this time, the following animals and situations will be considered for testing:

- Animals that have been in a household with a confirmed human COVID-19 case.
- Threatened or endangered non-human primates or other species in zoos or other facilities.
- Recently imported animals exhibiting an atypical pattern of disease suggesting a novel pathogen.
- Animals that are part of a validated research project.



TEST APPROVAL

Testing of animals for SARS-CoV-2 requires approval by the DSHS State Public Health Veterinarian and the TAHC State Veterinarian.

If you are a veterinarian who would like to request approval to test a pet for SARS-CoV-2, please call 800-550-8242.

Once approved, the TAHC will coordinate with the requesting veterinarian to ensure proper sampling and media are used for submission to the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL). The requesting veterinarian must implement proper public health standards when conducting the test: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/guidelines-ppe-covid-19-pandemic-demand-exceeds>.

CONFIRMATION OF RESULTS

All positive results on initial testing will be confirmed at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory; presumptive results will be reported to the TAHC and DSHS.

In addition, any SARS-CoV-2 confirmation in animals will be reported to the appropriate federal and international authorities.

TAHC, USDA, DSHS, and the CDC will work collaboratively with the submitting veterinarian on any necessary response.

RESOURCES

TAHC Website: <https://www.tahc.texas.gov/covid-19.html>

DSHS Website: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html>

AVMA Website: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>

TVMA Website: <https://www.tvma.org/Resources/COVID-19-Resources>