



FAQ on Animal Coronavirus Testing

*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.

Can animals get the new coronavirus?

To date, very few animals have been reported to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 worldwide, and most have been in animals that had close contact with a person with COVID-19.

We are still learning about this virus, but we know that it is zoonotic and it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by SARS-CoV-2.

The first case of an animal testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the United States was a tiger with a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. Samples from this tiger were taken and tested after several lions and tigers at the zoo showed signs of respiratory illness. Public health officials believe these large cats became sick after being exposed to a zoo employee who was actively shedding virus. This investigation is ongoing.

USDA is working with CDC and other human and animal health partners to monitor this situation and will continue to provide updates as information becomes available.

We encourage anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 to isolate themselves from other people and animals, including pets, during their illness until we know more about how this virus affects animals. People who are showing symptoms of the virus and who must be around animals while sick, should take [proper precautions](#) (as outlined by CDC) to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Will animals be tested for coronavirus?

This is an evolving situation, however, CDC and USDA do not recommend routine testing of animals for this virus at this time.

Public health and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals that are showing signs and that are known to have been exposed to the virus out of an abundance of caution. The decision to test will be made collaboratively between local, state or federal public health **and** animal health officials. The guidance is available online at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/animal-testing.html>

Who will collect the samples from animals?

After the decision is made to test, the state animal health officials will designate a the state animal health official(s) will identify the appropriate person to collect the sample. to collect the sample [using appropriate personal protective equipment and sample collection methods](#).

State animal health laboratories can conduct animal testing, but any positive samples would need to be confirmed through additional testing by USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

Performing animal testing should not reduce the availability of tests for people. Testing performed on animals may be based on the published tests used in people, however, reagents are available that are not required for testing people. The NVSL and National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories are using reagents for testing animals that are not required for testing in people.

What should I do if I think my animal has the new strain of coronavirus?

Consult your veterinarian with any questions about your animal’s health. Make sure to tell your veterinarian if your animal has been around a person with COVID-19, and if your animal is showing any signs of illness. Call ahead and arrange the veterinary hospital or clinic visit.

If you are sick with COVID-19 and your pet becomes sick, do not take your pet to the veterinary clinic yourself. Call your veterinarian and let them know you have been sick with COVID-19. Some veterinarians may offer telemedicine consultations or other alternate plans for seeing sick pets. Your veterinarian can evaluate your pet and determine the next steps for your pet’s treatment and care. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested will contact state animal health officials, who will work with public and animal health authorities to decide whether samples should be collected and tested.

Members of the public or licensed rehabilitators should contact the state wildlife agency about potential cases in wildlife that may warrant testing. The state wildlife agency will consult with the state public health and animal health officials for a decision on whether testing should proceed.

Can I test my animal through a private veterinary laboratory?

We recommend working through your local, state or federal public health and animal health officials to determine whether testing is appropriate.

USDA is aware of private veterinary laboratories that are conducting SARS-CoV-2 testing on animal samples. Any positive samples require confirmation testing at USDA’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories.

In accordance with international reporting guidelines, collecting additional samples and background information may be required to complete confirmatory testing of cases from private laboratories.

Additional resources:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the best source for information about COVID-19 in people and risks to animals. CDC information about COVID-19 in animals may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>

There are several additional resources for information about this virus in animals:

U.S. Department of Agriculture - www.usda.gov

The World Organization for Animal Health – www.oie.int