



Guidance Document for SARS-CoV-2 Testing of Animals

Updated September 3, 2020

KEY POINTS

- Routine testing of animals for SARS-CoV-2 is not recommended
- The decision to test an animal, including companion animals, livestock, and wild or zoo animals will be made by the Oregon State Veterinarian, in consultation with the Oregon State Public Health Veterinarian and appropriate local, state, and/or federal public health and animal health officials.
- This document provides guidelines for animal SARS-CoV-2 testing given limited resources.
- Veterinarians are strongly encouraged to rule out other, more common causes of illness in animals before considering SARS-CoV-2 testing.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause flu-like illness in people, while others cause illness in certain types of animals such as cattle, camels, and bats. There is a new coronavirus believed to have mutated from bats that is now affecting humans. 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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that there is presently no evidence that animals can transmit this virus to people. In some rare situations, certain types of animals, including pets, have become infected with SARS-CoV-2 after close contact with people infected with COVID-19. To date, the primary risk of spread of SARS-CoV-2 remains human-to-human contact.

Currently there is no scientific basis to support widespread testing of animals. However, there may be limited situations in which testing would be appropriate. The purpose of this document is to describe the most likely justifications for SARS-CoV-2 testing and provide guidance to veterinary practitioners and the public. These guidelines shall apply to all SARS-CoV-2 testing proposed for domestic animals within the State of Oregon. All animal testing will be conducted by the Oregon State University, Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OSU OVDL), unless an exception for testing at an alternative laboratory is approved by the Oregon State Veterinarian.

AUTHORITIES

ORS 596.020 – Duties of the State Department of Agriculture in the protection of people and livestock
OAR 603-011-0212 – Diseases Reportable by Veterinarians

TESTING ANIMALS FOR SARS-CoV-2

The decision to test an animal will be authorized by the Oregon State Veterinarian, in consultation with the Oregon State Public Health Veterinarian and appropriate local, state, and/or federal public health and animal health officials.



Authorization for testing will be conducted on a case-by-case basis

Based on current CDC guidance, justifications for testing include:

- Animal with clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection, with history of direct exposure to a person or animal suspected or confirmed to be infected with SARS-CoV-2. Clinical work-up with appropriate diagnostic testing has ruled out common causes of the patient's signs of disease.
- Animal with clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection, with history of exposure to a known high-risk environment (i.e., where human cases or animal cases have occurred), such as a residence, facility, or vessel (e.g., nursing home, prison, cruise ship). Clinical work-up with appropriate diagnostic testing has ruled out common causes of the patient's signs of disease.
- Animals in a mass care or group setting (e.g., farm, animal feeding operation, animal shelter, boarding facility, zoo, etc) including companion animals, livestock, and other species, where their exposure history to people with COVID-19 is unknown and a cluster of animals show clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Clinical work-up with appropriate diagnostic testing has ruled out common causes of the patient's signs of disease.
- Threatened, endangered or otherwise imperiled/rare animal in a rehabilitation or zoological facility with possible exposure to SARS-CoV-2 through an infected person or animal, and animal is asymptomatic or has clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Based on the USDA's current case definition, clinical signs likely to be compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infection in mammalian animals may include a combination of the following:

- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Fever
- Lethargy
- Nasal discharge
- Ocular discharge
- Sneezing
- Vomiting

VETERINARIAN AUTHORIZATION

Contact the State Veterinarian to request permission to test an animal for SARS-CoV-2. Requests should contain the following information:

- Animal owner's name, address, email address, and phone number
- Animal's name, species, age, sex
- Animal's location if different from the owner's address
- Veterinarian's reason for testing the animal(s)
- Findings of physical, radiographic, or sonographic examinations and any diagnostic testing conducted
- Complete patient history
- Date of COVID-19 diagnosis in household or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 exposure



If approved for sampling, ODA will provide the veterinarian with a sample collection kit, instructions, and a signed sample submission form. Samples must be collected using provided supplies, and received by OVDL within 72 hours of collection.

Proper PPE, including eye protection, face covering, gown, and gloves should be worn while collecting samples in a closed room. **Clean and disinfect the room after sample collection has been completed.**

LABORATORY TESTING

- Will be conducted by the OSU Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) under approval from the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) as an accredited National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) lab.
- OVDL will reject any samples that are received without approval, or which have been collected and/or submitted outside of these guidelines.

Positive Results

- Will require confirmation through additional testing by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL).
- Will only be reported publicly when confirmed by NVSL and information has been communicated with the Oregon State Veterinarian and the Oregon State Public Health Veterinarian. Owner, household, and veterinarian's personal information will be kept confidential.
- Information will be shared with the USDA, CDC, and National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO) for unified messaging and understanding of SARS-CoV-2 human/animal transmission.

MANAGEMENT OF SARS-CoV-2 POSITIVE ANIMALS

If an animal has a positive result we will not remove the animal from the home. Guidance for the care of animals will be provided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and federal animal health and public health officials.