



Arkansas Department of Health

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COVID-19 Guidance and Resources for Veterinary Services

Key Concepts

- This interim guidance is for veterinarians and their staff who may be treating or advising on companion animal medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Veterinary facilities have unique characteristics that warrant unique infection control considerations.
- At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals play a significant role in spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on the limited data available, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. We are still learning about this virus, and **it appears that in some rare situations, people can spread the virus to animals**. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by the virus, and the role animals may play in the spread of COVID-19.
- To protect staff and preserve personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, veterinary clinics should prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures until regular business operations resume in your community. Curbside service and telemedicine can be effective options to support patient care while social distancing.
- Proactively communicate to both staff and pet owners the need for them to stay at home if sick.
- Develop a plan for what to do if a pet owner with respiratory symptoms comes into your clinic, or if a pet with a history of exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 needs to be seen.

Purpose: The intent of this guidance is to facilitate preparedness and to ensure practices are in place in a companion animal veterinary clinical setting to help people and animals stay safe and healthy.

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This is a rapidly evolving situation. ADH and CDC will update this guidance as needed, and as additional information becomes available. Please check the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) periodically for updated information as well as interim guidance.

Veterinarians should use their best clinical judgement when evaluating companion animals and considering appropriate PPE to use and precautions to take.

Note: The scientific name of this novel coronavirus is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). In people, the disease caused by the virus is called Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19. In the context of animal health, we refer to the disease as SARS-CoV-2.

What do we currently know about animals and COVID-19?

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 in humans, [is thought to be spread](#) primarily through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, or talking. There are also reports that people may be able to spread the virus while pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic. We are still learning about this novel zoonotic virus, and **it appears that in some rare situations, human to animal transmission can occur.**

CDC is aware of a small number animals, including dogs and cats, [reported](#) to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 after close contact with people with COVID-19. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and CDC confirmed infection with SARS-CoV-2 in two pet cats with mild respiratory illness in New York, which were the first confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infections in companion animals in the United States. Both cats are expected to recover. The cats had close contact with people confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, suggesting human-to-cat spread. Additional companion animals have now been confirmed with SARS-CoV-2 positive tests (see press releases below).

Press Release: Confirmation of COVID-19 in Two Pet Cats in New York

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0422-covid-19-cats-NYC.html>

Press Release: Household cat confirmed with virus that causes COVID-19

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNBAH/bulletins/28eac81>

Press Release: Confirmation of COVID-19 in Pet Dog in New York

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sa-06/sars-cov-2-dog

Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by SARS-CoV-2. Limited information is available to characterize the spectrum of clinical illness associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection in animals. Clinical signs thought to be compatible with SARS-CoV-2 infection in animals include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, nasal/ocular discharge, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Additional Resources:

CDC COVID-19 Pets and Other Animals:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/pets-other-animals.html>
- Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics Treating Companion Animals During the COVID-19 Response:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/veterinarians.html>

- Interim Guidance for Public Health Professionals Managing People with COVID-19 in Home Care and Isolation Who Have Pets or Other Animals:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html>
- CDC Evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Animals: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/animal-testing.html?deliveryName=US_1164-DM27551
- USDA-APHIS One Health COVID-19 Website (including confirmed SARS-CoV-2 in US animals):
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_One_Health
- AVMA COVID-19 Resources for Veterinarians:
<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>
- AVMA SARS-CoV-2 in Animals Updates:
<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/sars-cov-2-animals-including-pets>
- Interim Recommendations for Intake of Companion Animals from Households Where Humans with COVID-19 are Present:
https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/interim-recommendations-intake-companion-animals-households-humans-COVID-19-are-present?deliveryName=US_1164-DM27551
- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Q&A on COVID-19:
<https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>
- The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) COVID-19 Advice & Resources:
<https://wsava.org/news/highlighted-news/the-new-coronavirus-and-companion-animals-advice-for-wsava-members/>
- National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention:
<http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf>

Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html>
- Meat and Poultry Processing Facility Assessment Toolkit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/meat-processing-assessment-tool.html>



Arkansas Department of Agriculture



Arkansas Department of Health

COVID-19 Guidance Document
SARS-CoV-2 Animal Testing

May 1, 2020

Animal Testing Authorization:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD), and National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) **do not recommend** that companion animals be routinely tested for SARS-CoV-2.
- Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) State Veterinarian, Dr. Randolph Chick, in coordination with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) State Public Health Veterinarian, Dr. Laura Rothfeldt, will determine whether a request for testing falls within the criteria established in State of Arkansas guidelines.
- The Arkansas State and Public Health Veterinarians will only issue determinations regarding animals of Arkansas origin.
- The CDC One Health Group has provided the following testing guidance for SARS-CoV-2, consistent with guidance from the State of Arkansas.

Criteria	Epidemiological Risk		Clinical Features
A	Animal with history of close contact with a person suspected or confirmed COVID-19.	AND	Animal has clinical signs of a new, concerning illness that is suspicious of an infectious disease.
B	Animal with exposure to a known high-risk environment (i.e. where a human outbreak occurred), such as a residence, facility, or vessel (e.g. nursing home, prison, cruise ship).		
C	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 Animal has clinical signs of a new, concerning illness that is suspicious of an infectious disease.
D	Animals in a mass care or group setting (e.g. animal shelter, boarding facility, animal feeding operation, zoo) including companion animals, livestock, and other species, where their exposure to people with COVID-19 is unknown.	AND	A cluster of animals show clinical signs of a new, concerning illness that is suspicious of an infectious disease.

- **Determinations of whether a request for testing falls within the established criteria will be conducted on a case by case basis:**
 - When requested by a **private veterinarian** who is reporting
 - A new, concerning illness that cannot be otherwise explained **AND**
 - The companion animal has had close contact with a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection **AND**
 - Screening has been conducted for the companion animal for infectious diseases known to commonly cause illness in companion animals **OR**
 - The animal is a threatened, endangered or otherwise imperiled/rare animal in a rehabilitation facility, in the custody of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission or zoological facility with possible exposure to SARS-CoV-2 through an infected person or animal.
 - Requests for a determination of whether a request for SARS-CoV-2 testing of an animal falls within the established criteria are to be made in writing to the Arkansas State Veterinarian. The State Veterinarian can be reached for questions at (479) 200-2551 or Randolph.Chick@arkansas.gov.
 - Requests should contain the following information:
 - a. Animal owner's name, residence address (NOT POST OFFICE BOX), email address, and contact phone number
 - b. Animal's name, species, age, sex, identification (microchip, tattoos, etc.)
 - c. Animal's location - if different from the owner's residential address
 - d. Veterinarian's name, business address (NOT POST OFFICE BOX), email address, and contact phone number
 - e. Veterinarian's clinical reasoning for testing the animal(s)
 - f. Examination findings of physical, radiographic, or sonographic examinations and any relevant lab results
 - g. Complete patient history
 - h. Statements and records signed by Arkansas licensed veterinarian with USDA Accreditation number noted by signature
 - When requested by **academic institutions** for the purpose of research:
 - The proposal, sampling criteria, animal species and scope of the project will be outlined prior to authorization.
 - Researchers will establish an endpoint for each study in conjunction with ADA based upon time and date or number of animals/households tested.
 - If the scope of the project, the testing criteria, or the endpoint changes, the State Veterinarian must authorize those changes.

Veterinarian Authorization:

- If the State Veterinarian determines that the criteria have not been met, testing should not occur.
- If the State Veterinarian determines that the criteria have been met, a state- appointed veterinarian, USDA accredited veterinarian, or Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD) should collect the sample using [appropriate personal protective equipment](#).
- Official sampling collection methods will follow [USDA guidance](#).

Laboratory and Reporting:

- **Presumptive positive results:**
 - Will require confirmation through additional testing by USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL).
 - Will only be reported publicly when confirmed by NVSL and information has been communicated with the ADAs State Veterinarian and the ADH Public Health Veterinarian.
 - ADA will communicate the information to AAVLD, AVMA, CDC, USDA, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV), and National Assembly State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO) and work with those groups for unified messaging.

Management of animals in COVID-19 positive households

- ADA/ADH will default to [AVMA guidance](#) and [CDC's guidance](#) concerning the management of animals in [shelters](#) and [households](#) in which a human has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.
- There is no current guidance available regarding quarantine of test positive dogs, cats or other pets. ADA/ADH will follow applicable guidance provided by the USDA/CDC working group as new information becomes available.
- If a companion animal has a positive result, ADA/ADH will not remove the animal from the home but will follow guidance and promote key messages issued by the CDC and USDA.
- [AVMA guidance](#) suggests dogs should be walked outside for elimination and exercise but direct contact with other companion animals should be avoided as a best practice to protect animal health. Cats should be kept indoors and not allowed to roam without supervision.
 - Feces may be infective and should be collected using gloved hands or a bag and disposed of immediately.
 - Ideally, these dogs and cats should be walked in an area that can be readily sanitized in a dedicated area separate from the general animal population.

Messaging:

- ❖ **Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of pets spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 in people is considered to be low. At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. There is a small number of animals around the world reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after having close contact with a person with COVID-19.**

Important SARS-CoV-2 Resources:

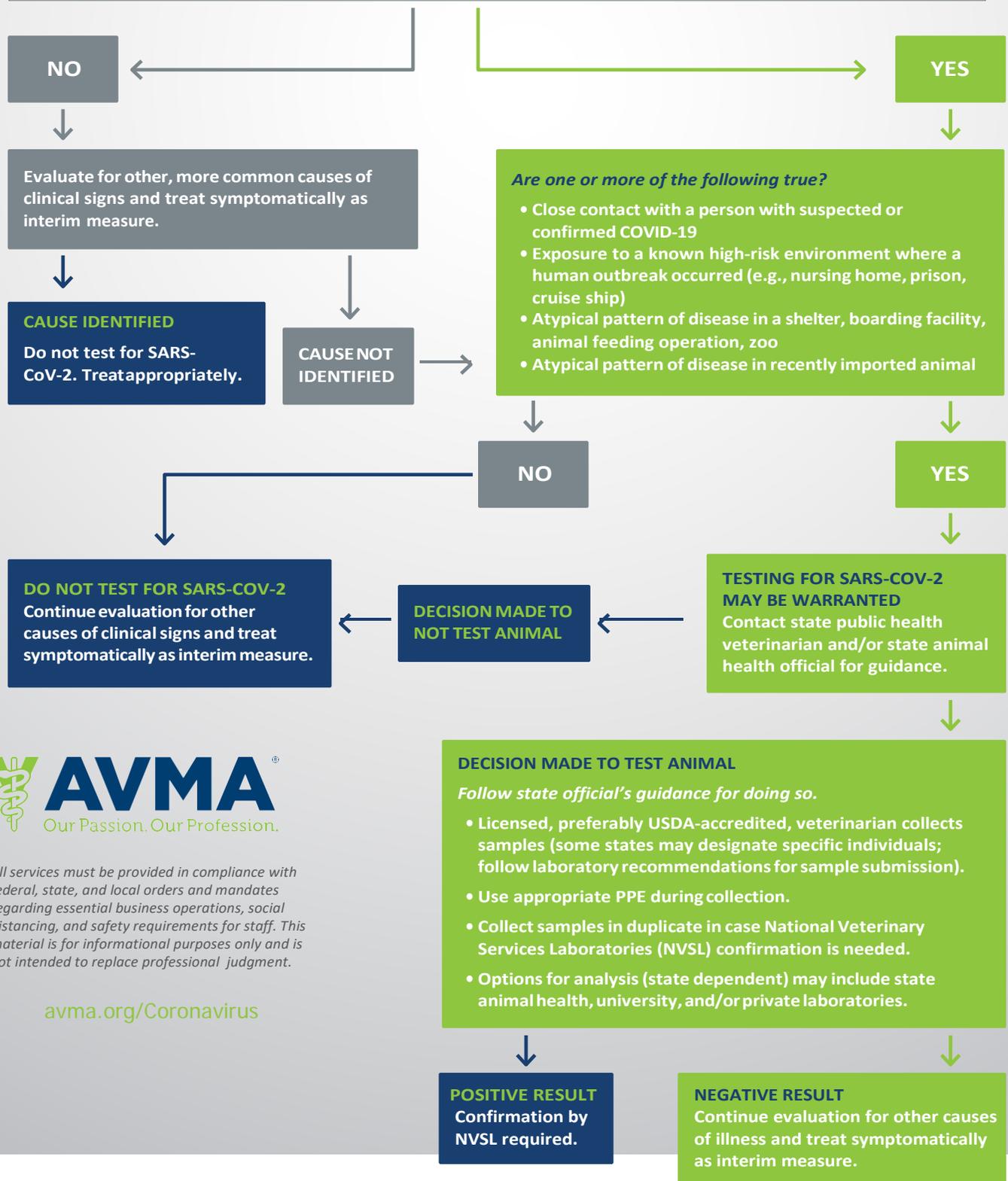
- [USDA Sample Procedures for State Animal and Public Health Officials](#)
- [USDA FAQ on Companion Animal Testing](#)
- [CDC Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 and Animals Webpage](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 and Animals FAQs](#)
- [AVMA and COVID-19](#)
- [AVMA COVID-19 Testing Chart](#)
- [OIE guidance](#)
- [National Association State Public Health Veterinarians](#)

TESTING FOR SARS-COV-2

Determining when to test veterinary patients

Veterinary patient presents with clinical signs consistent with infection with SARS-CoV-2 (e.g., fever, lethargy, nasal/ocular discharge, sneezing, coughing, breathing difficulty, vomiting, diarrhea)

Have other causes (e.g., infectious, metabolic, tumor) for clinical signs been ruled out?



All services must be provided in compliance with federal, state, and local orders and mandates regarding essential business operations, social distancing, and safety requirements for staff. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to replace professional judgment.

avma.org/Coronavirus