

Interim COVID-19 Domestic Animal Testing Guidance

March 31, 2020

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was discovered. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses.

While the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell University has the capability to test animals for the COVID-19 outbreak's causative agent, SARS-CoV-2, there is currently no scientific basis to support widespread testing of animals. There may be limited situations in which testing would be appropriate.

The purpose of this guidance 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 New York. All animal testing will be conducted by the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. An exception for testing at an alternative laboratory must be approved by the New York State Veterinarian.

Accordingly, the New York State Public Health Veterinarian at the Department of Health (DOH), the New York State Veterinarian at the Department of Agriculture and Markets (AGM), and the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab Director at Cornell University require the following procedure before authorizing the testing of an animal for SARS-COV-2:

- 1) No animal testing shall be done without the advance approval of the Office of the New York State Veterinarian at the Department of Agriculture and Markets.
- 2) Requests for SARS-CoV-2 testing of an animal shall be made to the Office of the New York State Veterinarian. During normal business hours, the State Veterinarian can be reached at (518) 457-3502. After-hours emergency requests can be directed to the NYS Watch Center at (518) 292-2200.
- 3) Requests for SARS-CoV-2 testing of an animal shall be accepted by e-mail or by telephone, from veterinarians authorized to practice in New York State or local public health department representatives.

- 4) Requests should contain the following information:
 - a) Animal owner's name, address, e-mail address, and phone number;
 - b) Animal's name, species, age, and sex;
 - c) Animal's location, if different from the owner's address;
 - d) Veterinarian's reason for testing the animal(s);
 - e) Findings of physical, radiographic, or sonographic examinations and any relevant lab results; and
 - f) Complete patient history.

- 5) In the case of testing requests for the purpose of research, the principal investigator must provide a research protocol which has been approved by the relevant institution's animal care and use committee.

- 6) Upon the submission of a request for animal testing, AGM, DOH and the Diagnostic Lab will consult to confirm the testing is appropriate and shall advise the requestor of the decision and how to proceed within 2 business days following receipt of requests by AGM. Research requests may require more time for review.

- 7) The most likely justifications for testing include:
 - a) Thorough and systematic diagnostic work up with appropriate diagnostic testing has ruled out common causes of the patient's signs of disease, and history strongly suggests exposure to SARS-CoV-2.
 - b) Atypical pattern of disease suggesting a novel pathogen arises in a mass care situation, such as an animal shelter, and common causes of illness have been ruled out by appropriate diagnostic testing, with results provided with the application.
 - c) Atypical pattern of disease suggesting SARS-CoV-2 arises among recently imported animals, and common causes of illness have been ruled out by appropriate diagnostic testing, with results provided with the application.
 - d) Testing is a part of valid research project.

For Additional Information on COVID-19

New York State Department of Health COVID-19 Webpage
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Webpage
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>