



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Division of Animal Health
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TESTING DOMESTIC COMPANION ANIMALS AND LIVESTOCK FOR COVID-19

NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA) & NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) Guidance Document

COVID-19 IN ANIMALS (OVERVIEW)

Currently, there is no evidence that 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 low. In some rare situations, people may be able to 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. The clinical spectrum of illness for the SARS-CoV-2 virus remains largely undefined in animals. Animals may present with respiratory or gastrointestinal clinical signs based on the presentation of other coronaviruses more commonly found in animals as well as other emerging coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-1 infection. Clinical signs expected to be compatible with possible SARS-CoV-2 infection in mammalian animals may include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, lethargy, sneezing, nasal/ocular discharge, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Although there have been limited reports of domestic companion animals testing positive for COVID-19, the risk of transmission from animals to humans is thought to be low. Routine COVID-19 testing is not recommended.

COMMERCIAL LABORATORY TESTING:

Testing for COVID-19 is available for animals at a limited number of commercial laboratories approved by NJDA. The NJDA is following the USDA [case definition](#) as a guide for testing.

1. The following conditions should be met for laboratories to test for SARS-CoV-2:
 - a) A new, concerning illness that cannot be otherwise explained, and
 - b) The animal has had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 infection, and
 - c) Common companion animal illnesses have been ruled out by testing for infectious and non-infectious diseases. Rule-out testing may include, but is not limited to, respiratory disease RT-PCR panels, diarrhea RT-PCR panels, and cultures.
2. Positive and negative test results should be reported to the NJDA as they become available.



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ANIMAL TESTING AUTHORIZATION FOR VETERINARIANS:

Veterinarians are advised to consult with the NJDOH and NJDA when considering testing for COVID-19 to ascertain that the conditions are met before submitting samples to commercial labs.

- Requests for domestic companion animal testing should be directed to the NJDOH, either by calling 609-826-4872 or by e-mailing zoonoticrn@doh.nj.gov.
- Requests for livestock testing should be sent in writing to: NJanimalcovid19@ag.nj.gov.

SAMPLE COLLECTION

- 1) A NJ-licensed and accredited veterinarian will collect the sample [using appropriate personal protective equipment and sample collection methods](#). If an accredited veterinarian is not available at the veterinary facility, arrangements can be made through the NJDA for one to be provided free of cost.
- 2) Once properly identified, the samples, ice packs, and containers should be wiped with 70% alcohol.
- 3) Oral & nasopharyngeal swabs should be taken from animals with respiratory signs. Fecal swabs should be submitted if the animal is showing enteric signs. Swabs should be collected in separate vials or follow laboratory issued guidance.
- 4) Serum should be collected if available. SST tubes can be used. Spin the sample prior to shipping.
- 5) Keep all samples refrigerated (2-8°C for up to 72 hours). The serum may be frozen at -20°C.
- 6) [Transport media](#) – Use viral transport media; BHI, Universal Viral Transport media, or dry swab in 0.5 ml of saline. Synthetic swabs should be used. Avoid using wood and cotton swabs.

SAMPLE SUBMISSION

- 1) Follow your standard laboratory submission procedure (private labs).
- 2) For samples sent through the NJDA laboratory – Use the Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (AHDL) [submission form](#) should be completed – <https://jerseyvetlab.nj.gov/sample/>.
 - a) The AHDL will help the submitting veterinarian fill the [USDA 10-4 form](#).
 - b) The AHDL will help with the shipping label for the package.
 - c) Samples should be [cold packed for shipping](#).
 - d) Samples can be delivered to the AHDL to expedite the shipping, or you may use the shipping service provided by the approved lab.



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LABORATORY RESULTS

- 1) Positive tests will be confirmed by USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).
- 2) SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) detection in any animal is reportable per OIE guidance.
- 3) Laboratory results will be available on the client portal at the AHDL website.
- 4) All test results in domestic companion animals will be reported by AHDL to NJDOH.

IMPORTANT COVID-19 RESOURCES:

- 1) [USDA FAQ Animal Coronavirus Testing \(sample procedures\)](#)
- 2) [USDA FAQ Animal Coronavirus Testing \(animals generally\)](#)
- 3) [CDC Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics During the COVID-19 Response](#)
- 4) [CDC Guidance for managing people in home care and isolation with pets](#)
- 5) [American Veterinary Medical Association:](#)
- 6) [OIE guidance](#)
- 7) [National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

New Jersey Department of Agriculture
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COVID-19 related messages use this e-mail – NJAnimalCOVID19@ag.nj.gov

New Jersey Department of Health
Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program
P.O. Box 369 Trenton, NJ 08625
Phone: (609) 826-4872; Fax: (609) 826-4874
E-mail for COVID-19 related messages for domestic companion animals: zoonoticrn@doh.nj.gov