

# AAVLD Task Force Interim Guidance

## Indication for and management of SARS-CoV-2 testing of animals in the United States and Canada

At this time, the American Association of Laboratory Veterinary Diagnosticians (AAVLD) does not recommend routine or blanket testing for SARS-CoV-2 of any animal species in North America. AAVLD strongly encourages adherence to the USDA guidelines for testing on an individual, case-by-case basis, as described below.

All AAVLD laboratories have limited resources to maintain core animal health capacities while assisting our human health peers respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in people. SARS-CoV-2 testing of animals in large numbers will compete for, and diminish, resources available for the United States and Canada to respond to the pandemic in people.

Purpose for testing, a key element in the validation of diagnostic tests that is to establish diagnostic sensitivity and specificity, has not been determined for SARS-CoV-2 testing in animals. Routine testing of sick animals is not warranted unless there is an epidemiologic link to a COVID-19 human as outlined below.

**Involvement of the State Animal and Public Health Officials is critical for authorization of testing of an animal of any species.** Justification for testing should be communicated to those officials in each state for a collaborative and highly targeted testing, when needed. Justification for testing may include:

- Common causes of the patient's clinical signs have been ruled out and the history strongly suggests exposure to SARS-CoV-2.
- Atypical pattern of disease suggesting a novel pathogen in a mass care situation, such as an animal shelter. The request for diagnostics should include a preliminary rule out of common causes of illness.
- Atypical pattern of disease suggesting SARS-CoV-2 infection of recently imported animals. Appropriate diagnostic should be used for preliminary rule out of common causes of illness.
- Testing is part of approved research projects gathering scientific information to better understand if and how pets could be affected by SARS-CoV-2 and help clarify the role, if any, of pets in human COVID-19. The project should have approved biosafety and animal care and use protocols.

**Further guidance for veterinarians:** COVID-19 is an OIE notifiable disease. All presumptive positive results require confirmation by the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories. Because animal-to-human transmission has not been observed in the current outbreak, testing for SARS-CoV-2 should be limited to animals that meet one or more of the four criteria above. Routine testing without a defined purpose can hamper the national and international response and may cause harm (such as abandonment) to the welfare of pets.

### References:

1. [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fanimals.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fanimals.html)
2. [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/one\\_health/downloads/faq-sapho-on-companion-animal-testing.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/one_health/downloads/faq-sapho-on-companion-animal-testing.pdf)