

April 21, 2020

**SARS-CoV-2 Animal Testing GUIDANCE**

**Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Guidance Document**

**Animal Testing Authorization:**

- The Center of Disease Control (CDC), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) and National Association of Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) do not recommend that companion animals be tested routinely for SARS-CoV-2.
- Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in animals can only be made in Washington by the Washington State Veterinarian, Dr. Brian Joseph or, in the event he is unavailable, Washington State Assistant State Veterinarian, Dr. Amber Itle in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH) according to guidance contained in this document.
- The Washington State and Public Health Veterinarians can only authorize testing of Washington origin animals.
- The CDC One Health Group has provided the following testing guidance for SARS-CoV-2, consistent with guidance from the State of Washington

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Epidemiological Risk</b>		<b>Clinical Features</b>
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.

- **Authorization for testing in Washington 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 recommended to the client 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 Washington Department of Fish and

- Wildlife or zoological facility with possible exposure to SARS-CoV-2 through an infected person or animal.
- 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 WSDA 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:**

- Once the decision is made to test, the State Veterinarian will authorize and designate, a state-appointed veterinarian, USDA accredited veterinarian, or Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD) to collect the sample using [appropriate personal protective equipment](#).
- Sample collection methods will be verified with guidance from the Washington Animal Disease and Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL).
- [Official sampling will follow USDA guidance](#).

#### **Laboratory and Reporting:**

- [Washington Animal Disease and Diagnostic Laboratory \(WADDL\)](#) will conduct initial animal testing and provide test kits to authorized veterinarians.
- SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) detection in any animal is reportable per [OIE guidance](#).
- **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 Washington State Veterinarian and the Public Health Veterinarian.
  - WSDA will communicate the information to AAVLD, AVMA, CDC, NASPHVUSDA, National Assembly State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO) and work with those groups for unified messaging.

#### **Management of animals in COVID-19 positive households**

- WSDA 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. WSDA will follow any guidance provided by the USDA/CDC working group if new information becomes available.
- If an animal has a positive result, WSDA will not remove the animal from the home.
- [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.
  - Feces should be collected using gloved hands or a bag and disposed of immediately.
  - Ideally, these dogs should be walked in an area that can be readily sanitized in a dedicated area separate from the general animal population.

#### **Messaging**

- **At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread SARS-CoV-2 to people.**
- WSDA has authorized a limited number of research projects to test animals to:
  - Help identify risk factors for human to animal transmission of SARS-CoV-2.
  - Gain an understanding of prevalence of infected dogs and cats in SARS-CoV-2 infected homes and shelters in WA.
  - Understand the role of companion animals in virus transmission, if any.

**Important SARS-CoV-2 Resources:**

- [USDA sample procedures](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture FAQ on companion animal testing](#)
- [CDC Guidance for managing people in home care and isolation with pets](#)
- [American Veterinary Medical Association](#)
- [OIE guidance](#)
- [National Association State Public Health Veterinarians](#)
- [WSVMA COVID-19 resources for veterinarians](#)

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**Important message from the Veterinary Board of Governors**

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Washington State Veterinary Board of Governors (board) is working to assist the veterinary community by sharing information about governmental actions and by developing messages, policies, or rules to further support the profession.

**Essential Procedures** – In a [previous communication](#), the board provided information about the governor’s proclamation that [COVID-19 Non Urgent Medical Procedures](#) should be delayed to preserve medical equipment and supplies and that the [American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\)](#) has published guidance on this topic.

The board would like to further communicate that each patient and situation is unique. Therefore, the veterinarian must exercise sound professional judgement to determine which situations may be safely managed via telemedicine, which may be safely postponed, and which can only be appropriately managed in-person without postponement. Consideration should be given to the state of emergency and the need for compliance with any active [executive orders](#) while also protecting patient and public health.

If there is a concern about a practitioner performing non-essential procedures, a complaint may be [filed with the governor’s office](#).

**Special Meetings** –The board is holding weekly special meetings on Fridays from April 3 through May 1, 2020, as needed, to discuss and act on issues related to the COVID-19 outbreak. They will share information and agendas for the meetings through this email distribution list.

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## **New COVID-19 Links**

Updated information from AVMA:

- [Sharing PPE, ventilators, and personnel in support of human medicine](#)

AVMA press release:

- [National Dog Bite Prevention Coalition offers tips for safely sheltering at home with pets during the COVID-19 crisis](#) (April 15)

AVMA blog posts:

- [COVID-19: Answering the call together](#) (April 18)
- [Small business loans: Latest COVID-19 update](#) (April 16)
- [COVID-19: Managing employees who are ill or may be exposed](#) (April 16)
- [COVID-19 triage: Determining which cases are urgent](#) (April 15)