



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Animal Health Program

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**Call the Washington State Veterinarian BEFORE Testing Animals for SARS-CoV-2**

The primary means of people becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is through person-to-person spread. Based on the limited data available, the risk of animals spreading SARS-CoV-2 to people is considered low. We are still learning about this virus. In some situations, people can spread the virus to animals, especially during close contact. At this time, however, there is no evidence animals play a significant role in spreading SARS-CoV-2.

In Washington State, the decision to test an animal for SARS-CoV-2 should be made collaboratively between the attending veterinarian and the Washington State Veterinarian, Dr. Brian Joseph. The attending veterinarian should contact Dr. Joseph before submitting samples for testing. Routine testing of animals for SARS-CoV-2 is NOT recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Agriculture, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, or the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials.

Clinical signs in animals are not unique to SARS-CoV-2. These signs can include lethargy, fever, sneezing, coughing, difficulty breathing, discharge from eyes or nose, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. More common causes of these clinical signs should be ruled out before testing an animal for SARS-CoV-2. Federal agencies have created guidance, including epidemiological risk factors and clinical features for SARS-CoV-2 in animals to help guide decisions regarding animal testing (see Table 1 below).

As of May 14, 2021, the World Organisation for Animal Health reports the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been found in individual members of the following species from various countries: dog, mink, cat, ferret, puma, lion, tiger, snow leopard, gorilla, and otter. Some but not all of these animals have shown signs of illness.

### Resources

SARS-CoV-2 and animal testing

- [AVMA – Testing Animals for SARS-CoV-2](#)
- [Evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Animals](#)
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Veterinary Clinics Treating Companion Animals During the COVID-19 Response](#)

United States: SARS-CoV-2 in Domestic and Captive Animals

- [USDA – Cases of SARS-CoV-2 in Animals in the United States](#)

## WSDA State Veterinarian Contact Information

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Table 1: Criteria to Guide Evaluation and Laboratory Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in Animals

Criteria	Epidemiological Risk		Clinical Features
A	Animal with history of exposure <sup>3</sup> to a person or animal suspected or confirmed to be infected with SARS-CoV-2.	AND	Animal has clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection. <sup>3</sup>
B	Animal with exposure to a known high-risk environment (i.e., where human cases or animal cases have occurred), such as a residence, facility, or vessel (e.g. nursing home, prison, cruise ship).		
C	Threatened, endangered or otherwise imperiled/rare animal <sup>4</sup> in a rehabilitation, sanctuary 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 suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection <sup>3</sup> .
D	Animals in a mass care or group setting (e.g., farm, animal feeding operation, animal shelter, boarding facility, zoo, or other animal holding) including companion animals, livestock, and other species, where their exposure history to people with COVID-19 is unknown.	AND	A cluster of animals show clinical signs suspicious of SARS-CoV-2 infection. <sup>3</sup>

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NOTE: Veterinarians are encouraged to consider other, more common causes of illness in animals and use their clinical judgement when deciding whether or not to test animals for SARS-CoV-2.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/animal-testing.html>