

Testing companion animals and livestock for COVID-19

Can people get this virus from animals?

At this time there is no evidence to suggest any animals, including pets or livestock, can spread COVID-19 infection to people.

Should any animal showing signs of respiratory illness be tested?

The State of Minnesota, USDA and CDC do not recommend routine testing of animals for this virus. Because the situation is ever-evolving, public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals out of an abundance of caution.

What should I do if I think my animal has the virus?

Call your veterinary clinic with any questions about your animal's health. Also call ahead before you visit the clinic in order to ensure the veterinary clinic is prepared for your visit. Make sure to tell your veterinarian if your animal was exposed to a person diagnosed and sick with COVID-19, and if your animal is showing any signs of illness. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested will contact state animal health officials.

How will the decision to test be made?

Public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals that are showing signs of illness and that are known to have been exposed to the virus on a case by case basis. Routine testing of companion animals is not recommended at this time.

The decision to test an animal will be authorized by the Minnesota State Veterinarian in cooperation with the Minnesota State Public Health Veterinarian.

Minnesota's State Veterinarian can authorize testing on any animal within the state. Authorization for testing will be conducted within the two following areas:

1. 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;
 - Common companion animal illnesses have been ruled out by testing for infectious diseases.

2. 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 the Board of Animal Health 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.

Who will collect the samples from animals?

State and federal veterinarians, or accredited veterinarians as appropriate, should collect samples using personal protective equipment and correct sample collection methods.

What will happen to an animal that tests positive for the virus?

The Board will recommend home isolation of any animal with positive test results.

Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I have COVID-19?

It's recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them.