

SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Companion Animal Sample Collection and Shipping

Updated December 11, 2020

There is no evidence to support that household pets play a significant role in spreading SARS-CoV-2 to people. However, due to the ever-evolving situation, public and animal health officials are continuing to monitor the situation.

Understanding that SARS-CoV-2 in pets is uncommon, veterinarians in consultation with pet owners, may deem certain cases appropriate to test for SARS-CoV-2. Veterinarians are asked to report these suspect cases to the Florida State Veterinarian's Office to ensure comprehensive information collection and tracking. Veterinarians can submit appropriate samples directly to the Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (BADDL), another National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratory, or private laboratory. All positive samples will be required to be sent for confirmatory testing at the USDA, National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa.

Based on limited scientific data, keeping animals that test positive for COVID-19 away from other animals and people should be considered best practice.

Sample Collection for Testing at BADDL:

If a decision is made to test a companion animal which has had close contact with a person infected with COVID-19, it is recommended that RT-PCR be used to test oral, nasal, and fecal/rectal samples.

Oral, nasal (for medium to large sized animals), and rectal/fecal swabs should be collected per [OIE recommendations](#) and according to established sample collection protocols. Oral and nasal swabs should be stored in separate vials. If blood samples are approved to be submitted, the sample should be collected (for archiving – testing not yet available) in sterile tubes (Vacutainer preferred, serum separator tube optional). The tubes should be spun, and the serum removed and placed in a clean tube and refrigerated. Do not freeze whole blood or samples with the clot remaining. It is not necessary to remove the serum from the SST tubes prior to shipping.

Storage and Shipping:

Samples should be stored in viral transport media (e.g., universal VTM or BHI) or sterile saline or PBS; dry swabs are not acceptable for testing. Samples may be stored between 2°C- 8°C for up to 72 hours after collection. Serum may be frozen at -20°C.

Please follow the BADDL protocols for packaging and labeling for submissions to the laboratory. Label the samples, per other diagnostic samples, with the potential to infect humans under code "UN2814." Ensure the sample maintains the cold chain by utilizing gel ice packs.

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Livestock/Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory-BADDL/How-to-Submit-a-Sample-to-the-Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory>.

For samples that will be submitted to BADDL, please call during business hours (321-697-1400) before shipping the sample, to assist in the submission process. Email the specimen submission form and tracking information to: diaglab@FDACS.gov.

For submissions to BADDL, please use this submission form:
<http://forms.freshfromflorida.com/09212.pdf>.

If you have any questions, please contact:

The Florida State Veterinarian's Office, Division of Animal Industry, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: (850) 410-0900, email: RAD@FDACS.gov.

Or

The Florida Public Health Veterinarian, Florida Department of Health: (850) 245-4117 or (850) 245-4401.