



Canadian Food
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne
d'inspection des aliments

INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR LABORATORIES TESTING ANIMALS FOR SARS-CoV-2



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PREAMBLE: THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY (CFIA) IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY AND PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICERS (CVO). IT MUST BE STRESSED THAT TESTING SHOULD ONLY BE CONDUCTED FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH THE PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL CVO WHERE THE ANIMAL RESIDES. GENERAL TESTING OF ANIMALS FOR SARS-COV-2 IS NOT RECOMMENDED.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE IS TO OUTLINE THE PROCESS FOR THE CONFIRMATION AND REPORTING OF RESULTS OF SARS-COV-2 TESTS CONDUCTED ON ANIMALS IN CANADA. THIS GUIDANCE PERTAINS TO TESTS ON ANIMALS SAMPLED IN THE COMMUNITY, OUTSIDE OF THE CONTEXT OF A LABORATORY EXPERIMENT.

AS AN EMERGING DISEASE, ANIMALS THAT TEST POSITIVE FOR SARS-COV-2 MUST BE REPORTED TO THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE) THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE OIE DELEGATE FOR CANADA IN CFIA. THE RESULTS OF NON-NEGATIVE FINDINGS NEED TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FOREIGN ANIMAL DISEASES, CFIA BEFORE CONSIDERED A POSITIVE RESULT.

Who are the contact points for consultation on testing of animals for SARS-CoV2 in each province/territory?

A list of the CVO contact points is provided in Annex 1

Who will collect animal samples and what precautions should they take?

Once the decision is made to test an animal, a veterinarian should collect the sample using appropriate personal protective equipment and sample collection methods. Care should be taken to prevent contamination of samples by the external surface of the animals or the surrounding environment. Annex 2 should be completed.

NOTE: Animal owners should be made aware of the international reporting requirements and that further information on the animal may be required if the result is positive to help further the understanding of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to animals.

What are the recommended samples to be collected?

Oral, nasal and rectal/fecal swabs should be collected per OIE recommendations and according to established sample collection protocols. Please store oral and nasal swabs in separate vials and ensure duplicate samples are taken for confirmatory testing.

If desired/agreed, collect blood samples (for archiving – testing not yet available) in sterile tubes (Vacutainer preferred, SST optional). The tubes should be spun, 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.

How should samples be stored?

Samples should be stored in viral transport media (e.g., universal VTM or BHI); if not available dry swabs in sterile tubes can be used. Samples may be stored at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours after collection. Serum may be frozen at -20°C.

How should samples be packaged and labelled and where should they be sent? These samples can be sent as “Exempt Animal Specimen” following the TDG rules associated with that designation and should be shipped on ice packs. *Further instructions on shipping to be provided by the laboratory providing the diagnostic service.*

Confirmation of non-negative samples

Any non-negative samples must be sent to the National Centre for Foreign Animal Diseases (NCFAD), in Winnipeg for confirmation. Duplicate samples along with cDNA from the original sample should be provided. Samples can be sent as “Exempt Animal Specimen” following the TDG rules associated with that designation and should be shipped on ice packs, overnight by AIR and 9 am delivery. The address for shipping is 1015 Arlington St., Winnipeg, MB, Canada. R3E 3M4, made attention to Dr. Kathleen Hooper-McGrevy, Diagnostic Coordinator. Please include a shipper’s declaration in box with itemized list of contents, shippers name and contact info. Once prepared to ship, please email the waybill number of the parcel to Dr. Kathleen Hooper-McGrevy at kathleen.hooper-mcgrevy@canada.ca and call ahead to the following number : 204-789-5048. Alternate contacts: Dr. John Copps john.copps@canada.ca, Dr. Brad Pickering bradley.pickering@canada.ca or Dr. Carissa Embury-Hyatt carrisa.emburyhyatt@canada.ca.

Reporting process

A positive finding of SARS CoV 2 in an animal meets the criteria for reporting to the OIE in accordance with the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code as an emerging disease. Reports need to include information on the species, diagnostic tests and relevant epidemiological information (see Annex 2). Reporting to the OIE is done through the office of the OIE Delegate for Canada: Dr. Andrea Ellis andrea.ellis@canada.ca, 613-608-2422 or Dr. Julie Pare julie.pare@canada.ca 450-513-4048.

PLEASE NOTE: Findings should not be reported publicly until after confirmation by the NCFAD and officially notified to the OIE. Communication to be coordinated between federal, provincial/territorial and local officials.

ANNEX 1

Provincial /Territorial CVO contact list

Province	Name	Email	Phone
British Columbia	Dr. Brian Radke	brian.radke@gov.bc.ca	778-666-0544
Alberta	Dr. Keith Lehman	keith.lehman@gov.ab.ca	708-427-6406
Saskatchewan	Dr. Betty Althouse	betty.althouse@gov.sk.ca	306-535-3476
Manitoba	Dr. Lisa Joachim	lisa.joachim@gov.mb.ca	204-794-1591
Ontario	Dr. Cathy Furness	ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca cathy.furness@ontario.ca	1-877-424-1300
Quebec	Dr. Helene Trepanier	Please send message through link below ¹	1 844 ANIMAUX 1-844 264-6289
New Brunswick	Dr. Steven Scott	steven.scott@gnb.ca	506-453-5412
Nova Scotia	Steven Tattrie	steven.tattrie@novascotia.ca	902-890-1575
PEI	Dr. Carolyn Sanford	cjsanford@gov.pe.ca	902-628-7072
Newfoundland	Dr. Beverly Dawe	beverlydawe@gov.nl.ca	709-637-2042 or 709-639-2121
Yukon	Dr. Mary VanderKop	mary.vanderkop@gov.yk.ca	867-667-5600
NWT	Dr. Brett Elkin	brett_elkin@gov.nt.ca	867-767-9055 ext 53014
Nunavut	Wanda Joy	wjoy@gov.nu.ca	867-222-2373

1. <https://www.mapag.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/santeanimale/centrale/Pages/Fichedesignalementsanteanimale.aspx>

Annex 2. Questionnaire

SARS-CoV-2 animal testing form

Veterinarian information

Veterinary Practitioner's Name	
Practitioner's Municipality	
Practitioner's Telephone Number	
Province	
Provincial/Territorial CVO has recommended testing	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Animal location information

Municipality (where animal is located)	
Postal Code (where animal is located)	
Owner has been informed that results and non-identifying information will be shared with provincial, territorial and federal authorities and may be reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Animal information

Animal identification (name, id number)	
Specimen submitted	
Animal Species	
Animal Type (companion, zoo, backyard, other)	
Breed	

Gender	
Age	
Reason for Testing	
Presence of clinical signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
If yes, indicate clinical signs	
Date of onset of clinical signs	
Who collected sample?	<input type="checkbox"/> Veterinarian <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Health Technician <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Date sample collected	

Laboratory submission information

Laboratory	
Date specimen received	
Date of diagnosis / test	
Lab Reference Number	
Testing method	
Test result	
Laboratory contact name	

Laboratory contact phone number	
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Additional epidemiological information

Does the animal being tested spend time outside without supervision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Other animals in household	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
List species and number of animals	
Indicate if other animals display clinical signs and dates of onset.	
Humans in household affected by COVID	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Indicate if COVID-19 has been diagnosed in humans in household; indicate presence of any clinical signs and date of onset	

FLOW CHART FOR INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR LABORATORIES CONDUCTING ANIMAL TESTS FOR SARS-COV-2

