



Agriculture and Markets

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SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Exceptional Cases:

The recent detection of SARS-CoV-2 in a tiger in a New York zoo has spurred interest in testing companion animals. While the NYS Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell University has the capability to test for this virus, there is currently no scientific basis to support testing of companion animals and any testing that is conducted will only be for exceptional cases.

Injudicious use of test capabilities carries the risk of pet owners misunderstanding the significance of PCR test results and drawing unwarranted conclusions about companion animals as sources of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

For this reason, New York, like many other states, is allowing its Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to perform SARS-CoV-2 testing only after joint approval of the State Veterinarian and State Public Health Veterinarian. Requests for testing will only be considered when submitted by a licensed veterinarian and must include the following:

- Owner Name, address, email address, and phone number
- Animal name, species, sex, and age
- Animal location if different from owner's address
- Veterinarian's reason for testing
- Findings of physical, radiographic or sonographic exams, all relevant laboratory test results
- Complete patient history

Requests will be considered for approval only if a thorough diagnostic work-up and appropriate diagnostic tests have been performed to rule out common causes of the patient's signs of disease, and if there is clear evidence of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 with clinical signs in the animal that could be consistent with SARS-CoV-2 infection. Requests should be sent to: DAI@agriculture.ny.gov with the subject line COVIDTEST.

Investigators who wish to test animals as part of a research project will be expected to produce a research protocol before approval.