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

April 23, 2020

There is no evidence to support that domestic animals including pets are a source of human infection of SARS-CoV-2. Due to the ever-evolving situation, public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals out of an abundance of caution. The decision to test will be made collaboratively between local, state, and federal public and animal health officials. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested should contact the State Veterinarian’s Office, who will collaborate with public and animal health authorities to decide whether samples should be collected and tested.

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

Sample Collection:

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, 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); 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 Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (BADDL) protocols for packaging and labeling for submissions to the testing 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.


For samples that will be submitted to BADDL, submission requires prior approval by the State Veterinarian’s Office. Once approved, please call BADDL 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.