

**Animal Health Update: Reminder of Free SARS-CoV-2 PCR Testing for Animals  
6.27.2024**

**Key Points**

- VPH will continue free SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing for animals, including pets, for the next year.
- Continued surveillance in animals is an important to prevent the establishment of animal reservoirs and monitor for new variants that could impact human health.
- VPH is providing no-cost testing for cats and dogs with a known exposure to COVID-19, and livestock regardless of known exposure. VPH is working with local shelters to test wildlife and pocket pets.
- Please reach out to us by email ([vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov)) or phone (213-288-7060) if you have an animal you'd like to test for SARS-CoV-2. Our staff can deliver a swab for sampling to your practice or to the pet owner's home.

Dear Colleagues,

This is a reminder from Los Angeles County Veterinary Public Health (VPH) **that we offer free SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing of animals**, and testing will continue for one more year.

Through our cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), VPH has tested 572 animals across various wildlife, marine mammal, and domestic species over the past year. Five animals were positive for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR: two rabbits, one hamster, one cat, and one coyote.

While five positives may not seem like much, and animals are not thought to play a significant role in transmission of the virus, it is important we continue surveillance for this emerging disease in animals to **prevent the establishment of new animal reservoirs and monitor for new variants that could have an impact on human health.**

Additionally, owners infecting their pets with SARS-CoV-2 may be more common than we think – serosurveys have shown **up to 40-50% of pet cats and dogs in COVID-19 positive households test positive by serology**<sup>1,2</sup>. Experimental and field studies have documented animal-to-animal transmission in many species including cats and hamsters, and small numbers of humans appear to have been infected by animals including two humans during an outbreak in hamsters in Hong Kong and a veterinarian who was infected by a cat in Thailand<sup>3-6</sup>.

**Please reach out to us by email ([vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov)) or phone (213-288-7060) if you have a patient you would like to test, or if anyone from your practice would like to have their personal pet tested.** VPH is interested in testing cats and dogs with a known exposure to COVID-19, and livestock (regardless of known exposure).

Please reach out to us by email ([vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov)) or phone (213-288-7060) if you have a patient you would like to test, or if anyone from your practice would like to have their personal pet tested.

Thank you for your continued One Health partnership.

## References

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Sincerely,

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