

Questions and Answers: Antech's SARS-CoV-2 surveillance program

What does this mean for pets?

The evolving scientific information around this new virus reinforces the need to counsel pet owners to treat pets as they do family members: isolating them from other infected individuals and practicing good hygiene when handling them.

Why is Antech undertaking this surveillance program?

We believe it is important to undertake this surveillance program to contribute to the body of scientific evidence needed to understand the transmission of this virus for both humans and animals, and to detect any possible emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in pet cats and dogs.

Is it surprising that cats have shown to be positive for the virus as part of the Antech surveillance program?

This is not surprising given our current understanding that cats and humans share similar receptors for SARS-CoV-2. At the moment, we continue to be guided by experts who advise that at this point in time this virus appears to spread most efficiently from human-to-human; and there is no current evidence that suggests pets can transmit the virus to humans.

Were the positive cats owned by COVID-19 positive people?

In addition to privacy considerations, we would not have access to this information since Antech works with the veterinarians, not the pet owners directly. The Antech surveillance program tests existing respiratory and gastrointestinal samples from cats and dogs as submitted by veterinarians.

In general, why is surveillance testing of pets necessary?

Surveillance testing will help assess how commonly SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted from infected people to their pets so we can better understand the dynamics and risks of this virus and make appropriate recommendations for control practices in animals. Surveillance testing can help us understand if SARS-CoV-2 is a cause of disease in cats (or other species) so we can better determine the potential animal health impact, and guide future clinical and infection control practices.

What is the process for the Antech surveillance program to manage information flow when samples test positive? And, how do owners get notified of their pet's test status?

As this is an emerging disease event, we are following the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection [guidance](#). As such, Antech notifies the relevant State Veterinarian if a presumptive positive is detected and the sample is then sent to the USDA's [National Veterinary Services Laboratory](#) (NVSL) for confirmation. Additionally, Antech provides the relevant State Veterinarian with the appropriate information for them to contact the submitting veterinarian. If the sample is confirmed as positive for the virus, the NVSL shares this information with USDA, and the results are then forwarded by USDA to the relevant State Veterinarian and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The State Veterinarian then reports results to the submitting veterinarian. Contact with the pet owner is coordinated by the State Veterinarian and relevant Public Health officials, noting that this may vary by State.

How do I seek testing for a pet?

It's important to note that the CDC and USDA do not recommend routine testing of animals for this virus at this time.

Antech continues to perform surveillance testing in dogs and cats on existing respiratory and gastrointestinal PCR samples to detect emergence and frequency of transmission of SARS- CoV-2 from humans to companion animals. Recommendations for routine testing for SARS- CoV-2 will be continuously reassessed as our understanding of the role of virus transmission in dogs and cats advances. The surveillance testing is specifically for veterinary use and does not consume resources for human testing.

Are the two cats who tested positive sick? If so, how are they recovering?

The two cats who were positive developed signs of illness. Upon confirming the results, the USDA informed the owners of their pet's status and is tracking these cases closely. Please visit the [USDA website](#) for additional information.