



For Immediate Release
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Confirmation of COVID-19 in a Cougar at a Wild Animal Exhibitor in Texas

AUSTIN, TX – The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) today announced confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) in a cougar at a facility that exhibits wild animals in Texas. This is the first cougar in the United States to be confirmed positive for SARS-CoV-2. A tiger from the same facility was also confirmed positive for the virus.

Samples from several animals at the facility were taken after showing clinical signs including coughing and wheezing. The animals are expected to fully recover. It is suspected that the large cats acquired the infection from a person working as a team member or volunteer who was positive for COVID-19.

SARS-CoV-2 infections have been reported in a small number of animals worldwide, mostly in animals that had close contact with a person with COVID-19. At this time, routine testing of animals is not recommended. State and local animal health and public health officials will work with USDA and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to make determinations about whether animals should be tested for SARS-CoV-2, using a [One Health](#) approach.

“Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has actively collaborated and partnered with the USDA, CDC, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) to coordinate the animal health portion of the COVID-19 response in Texas,” said Dr. Andy Schwartz, TAHC Executive Director and State Veterinarian. “The TAHC developed and implemented a protocol for animal testing in the state, continues to conduct animal assessments for suspect cases, and actively provides guidance to veterinarians and animal owners regarding animal testing.”

We are still learning about SARS-CoV-2 in animals, but there is currently no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus to people. Based on the information available, the risk of animals spreading the virus to people is considered to be low.

People with COVID-19 can spread the virus to some animals during close contact. It is important for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to avoid contact with pets and other animals to protect them from possible infection.

USDA will announce cases of confirmed SARS-CoV-2 in animals each time the virus is found in a new species. Confirmed cases in animals are updated weekly and are posted at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/sa_one_health/sars-cov-2-animals-us.



For more information about COVID-19 and animals and recommendations for pet owners, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/pets-other-animals.html> or <https://www.tahc.texas.gov/covid-19.html>.

For more information about testing in animals, see https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/one_health/downloads/faq-public-on-companion-animal-testing.pdf and https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHC_COVID19_FAQ.pdf.

For human health questions, please contact [DSHS](#), your [local public health entity](#), or doctor.

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The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character." TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry. Learn more about the TAHC by visiting www.tahc.texas.gov.