

Pet H1N1 lab tests, tips for pet owners

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The Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDL) is now testing samples from pets submitted by a veterinarian for H1N1 after a small number of companion animals in the U.S. have tested positive for pandemic 2009 H1N1.

H1N1 influenza in companion animals

A small number of companion animal H1N1 influenza cases have been confirmed in the U.S. The pets became ill after being in close contact with their owners and caretakers who were sick with H1N1. At this time, there is no evidence of pets passing H1N1 to people.

Case submission

The ADDL recommends testing only for companion animals that have clinical signs of respiratory disease and are in a household where humans have shown signs of influenza-like illness.

Because there have been only a few cases of H1N1 influenza in pets, there is limited information about the symptoms. Pets with H1N1 may behave as if they aren't feeling well, act lethargic and may appear to have a respiratory illness.

If a pet seems ill, it should be taken to a veterinarian for an exam as soon as possible. The veterinarian should be alerted that the pet has been exposed to someone with H1N1 influenza.

Nasal or mouth swabs

The ADDL is testing pets for H1N1 as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Laboratory Network. This network is using an H1N1 test initially developed for pigs. It was recently approved for testing companion animals. Tests are performed on nasal or mouth swabs. Swabs should be obtained by a veterinarian and submitted to the lab for results.

Veterinarians or pet owners with questions should contact Dr. Yan Zhang at (614)-728-6220 or yzhang@agri.ohio.gov.

