



### LaCONES-CCMB releases guidelines for COVID-19 testing in zoo animals

**Hyderabad, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2021:** COVID-19 has been reported in zoo animals in India in the last month. The Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES) of CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad is one of the four designated centres for testing animal samples for possible coronavirus infection. With support from Central Zoo Authority and Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change, it has released guidelines for zoo frontline on COVID-19 investigation in captive animals. “The guidelines provide detailed protocols that include pictorials and frequently asked questions for an easier understanding of those collecting samples for COVID testing in wildlife”, said Dr. Vinay K Nandicoori, Director, CSIR-CCMB.

LaCONES started testing animal samples for possible SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus infection in August 2020. The scientists found the first positive samples from Asiatic lions in Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad in April 2021. In this time, LaCONES team has tried testing for coronavirus using different kinds of – nasal, oropharyngeal, rectal and fecal samples from the animals. LaCONES regularly tests wildlife samples using DNA-based molecular biology tools to solve wildlife cases. These tests are very similar to the ones being used for coronavirus testing.

“We hope that our recommendations help the zoo staff in collecting and packing the samples appropriately before they send out to animal testing centres will smoothen the process for the zoos as well as testing centres. Given how difficult it is to get samples from animals, it is all the more important that we make most of the samples we get”, said Dr. Karthikeyan Vasudevan, Scientist-in-charge, LaCONES, CSIR-CCMB.

Link to the guidelines for COVID-19 investigation in captive animals:  
[http://cza.nic.in/uploads/documents/guidelines/english/GUIDELINES\\_FOR\\_COVID-19\\_INVESTIGATION\\_IN\\_CAPTIVE\\_WILD\\_ANIMALS.pdf](http://cza.nic.in/uploads/documents/guidelines/english/GUIDELINES_FOR_COVID-19_INVESTIGATION_IN_CAPTIVE_WILD_ANIMALS.pdf)