PCR testing swabs of the upper respiratory tract of dogs and cats is the most accurate diagnostic test for respiratory pathogens. This video demonstrates swab collection techniques and packaging for submission to diagnostic labs. Dogs and cats with respiratory infections are contagious. Care must be taken to protect clothing and hands from contamination by wearing gowns and gloves during swab collection. Gloves should be changed between animals to prevent cross-contamination of samples. To maximize protection of pathogens, at least two swabs should be collected from each dog and cat. Ideally, sterile dacron swabs with a plastic handle should be used, but wooden handle swabs are acceptable. For cats, swabs are most easily collected from the conjunctival sac and the caudal pharynx. For the conjunctival swab, pull lower eyelid away from the eyeball to expose conjunctival sac. Insert the tip of the swab into the sac and gently rub to remove the epithelial cells. Open a clean sterile tube, insert about one-third of the swab stick and snap the handle so that it breaks and releases the swab stick into the tube. Close the tube. For the caudal pharyngeal swab, rub the back of the oral pharynx near the tonsils, taking care to avoid the tongue and heavy saliva contamination. Add the swab to the same tube with the conjunctival swab. The swabs for each cat are pooled together in one tube and count as one sample. Label each tube with the animal’s ID, using a permanent marker such as a Sharpie pen, and drop the tube into a small bag you labeled with the animal’s ID number. Place the baggie into a cooler with a cold pack. Change gloves before moving on to the next cat. Once swabbing is complete, the individual sealed baggies should be placed together in a larger baggie and stored in the refrigerator pending shipping. Do not freeze the samples. [music playing]