[music playing] PCR testing with 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 dogs, swabs are most easily collected from the conjunctival sac, the nasal cavity, and the caudal pharynx. For the conjunctival swab, pull the 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 harboring the respiratory pathogens. Most dogs tolerate this procedure very well. 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 tip into the tube. Close the tube. For the nasal swab, insert the swab tip as far into a nostril as possible and quickly rub to remove epithelial cells. Most dogs will tolerate this once, but may not hold still for more attempts. 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 this swab to the same tube with the conjunctival and/or nasal swab. The swabs for each dog 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 that you labeled with the animal’s ID number. The baggie will prevent mix-up of samples and potential cross-contamination. Place the baggie into a cooler with a cold pack. Change gloves before moving on to the next dog. [music playing]