

COVID-19 spotted in Texas deer

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Researchers have confirmed that some white-tailed deer in Texas have COVID-19.

The [scientific community](#) has been alarmed by the prospect of deer becoming new hosts for COVID since July, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture found antibodies in [white-tailed deer in Illinois, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania](#).

The new study suggests that deer should not be overlooked as a possible source of SARS-CoV-2 infection among people as well as domestic and [wild animals](#), according to researchers. They are still trying to learn how COVID is transmitted between people and animals.

"The one thing we know best about SARS-CoV-2 is its unpredictability," said study author Douglas Watts, professor of biological sciences at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).

"Therefore, the transmission of the virus from infected deer back to humans, while not likely, may be possible," he said in a university news release.

Watts and his colleagues studied [blood samples](#) collected from deer of various ages in Travis County, Texas, during the first two months of 2021.

More than one-third of the samples showed evidence of SARS-CoV-2 neutralizing antibodies.

They found a significant prevalence among deer that were 1.5 years old. The researchers said this indicates that the disease is rampant among one of the most abundant wildlife species, particularly among males.

The 37% antibody prevalence seen in this study is similar to the 40% reported in deer in the other states.

The findings raise many questions about infection and transmission of

the virus among wild and [domestic animals](#), according to lead author Pedro Palermo, manager of the UTEP Border Biomedical Research Center's Biosafety Level 3 Infectious Disease Research Program lab.

The new findings were recently published in the journal *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases*.

More information: Pedro M. Palermo et al, SARS-CoV-2 Neutralizing Antibodies in White-Tailed Deer from Texas, *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases* (2021). [DOI: 10.1089/vbz.2021.0094](https://doi.org/10.1089/vbz.2021.0094)

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