



AS IT IS

Finland Uses Dogs to Find Coronavirus Infections

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Finland has deployed dogs trained to smell the coronavirus at the country's main international airport.

A trial of this experimental search method will take place for four months. If successful, the system could be established as a low-cost and quick way to identify infected travelers.

Finland's Smell Detection Association trained the four dogs now at work in the Helsinki Airport.

"It's a very promising method. Dogs are very good at **sniffing**," said Anna Hielm-Bjorkman, a University of Helsinki professor of animal medicine.

"If it works, it will be a good **screening** method..." she added. Hielm-Bjorkman believes the dogs could be used at hospitals, ports, group homes for older people and at large public gatherings.

The airport's Twitter page includes an image of one of the newly employed sniffers.

Researchers in countries including Australia, France, Germany and the United States are also studying dogs. But, the Finnish trial is among the largest so far.

Hielm-Bjorkman told The Associated Press that Finland is the second country after the United Arab Emirates - and the first in Europe - to use dogs to sniff out the coronavirus. A similar program started at Dubai International Airport over the summer.

Passengers who agree to take a free test under the voluntary program in Helsinki do not have direct physical contact with a dog.

They are asked to **swipe** their skin with material which is then put into a container and given to a dog waiting in a separate place. The animals - ET, Kossi, Miina and Valo - all received training in the past to smell cancer, diabetes or other diseases.

The trainers say it takes a dog a 10 seconds to sniff the virus samples before it gives the test result by **scratching** with a **paw**. They also might lie down, make a noise or do something else to make their findings known. The process should be completed within one minute, said Hielm-Bjorkman.

If the result is positive, the passenger is urged to take a coronavirus test to confirm the dog's result.

The airport is near Helsinki, in the city of Vantaa. Its deputy mayor, Timo Aronkyto, said the program is costing \$350,000. He called the amount "remarkably lower" than other methods of testing arriving passengers.

The four sniffer dogs are to work in the airport at different times, with two on duty at a time while the other two get a break.

"If the **scent** is easy, it doesn't wear out the dogs too much. But if there are lots of new scents around, dogs do get tired easier," said Anette Kare of the Smell Detection Association, as she patted her white dog ET.

I'm Mario Ritter, Jr.

Jari Tanner reported this story for the Associated Press. Mario Ritter Jr. adapted it for VOA Learning English. Caty Weaver was the editor.

Words in This Story

sniffing -v. to breathe air into your nose in a way that can be heard often in an effort to smell something

screening -v. examining or testing people to see if they can board a plane or take part in some other activity

swipe -v. to make a motion across a surface

scratching -v. to move a hand or paw across the ground or the body

paw -n. the foot of an animal

scent -n. a smell that can be identified by a dog or similar animal

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