

Coronavirus: Import ban introduced for non-approved Covid-19 test kits

Andre Chumko 20:15, Apr 22 2020

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COVID-19 Timeline
22 April 2020

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Dr Ashley Bloomfield give an update on coronavirus with six more cases on Wednesday.

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Medsafe has banned the importing, manufacturing, packing, sale, supply and use of all unapproved point of care Covid-19 test kits, effective immediately.

It comes after the medical regulatory body, which is run by the health ministry, said it would look at options to restrict their importing and sale, following medical workers calling for greater regulation.

Previously, the New Zealand Medical Association's Dr Kate Baddock told *Stuff* that in a climate where manufacturers could claim a test could detect antibodies, and that people may then have immunity to the virus, there was a dire need for regulation.

Point of care testing is where testing and analysis of specimens is taken place outside traditional laboratories, typically near to or at the site of patient care.



LEE JIN-MAN/AP

Coronavirus antibody test cartridges on a production line in South Korea. Medsafe on Wednesday announced an immediate ban on all unapproved tests.

READ MORE: Coronavirus: Medsafe to restrict importing and sale of Covid-19 test kits after calls for regulation

On Wednesday, the ministry said only approved Covid-19 point of care test kits would be able to be imported or sold in New Zealand. No test kits so far have been approved.

"Medsafe acknowledges that internationally there has been a lot of work done in developing point of care testing, but believes that more development is required to produce a reliable point of care test," it said in a statement.

"In particular, Medsafe has concerns about both the quality of testing from many of these kits and the likely impact of misinterpreted results."

Wednesday's ban, valid for one year, doesn't affect test kits currently being used by the health ministry, or the Institute of Environmental Science and Research, for Covid-19 testing.