

Rabies Testing Policies and Guidance

The following guidelines have been established for the transport, handling, analysis and reporting of rabies specimens received by Laboratory Services.

I. ACCEPTABLE SPECIMENS

- A full fresh, unfixed, cross section of the brain stem and either the cerebellum or the hippocampus is required for Rabies virus testing from the animal in question.
- All brain material must be extracted prior to delivery to Laboratory Services.
 - Bats should be submitted intact.
 - Please call for consultation if animal brain cannot be removed prior to submission.

**\$50 charge will be assessed for brain extraction of animals larger than a rodent.

II. PACKAGING & SHIPPING

- Double-bag specimen in heavy duty freezer bag (or single bag and place specimen in a rigid plastic container as to not compress it between ice packs). Absorbent material should be used in packaging.
- Place in a leak-proof rigid insulated container with appropriate number of ice packs to assure the package remains cool until it reaches the lab. Freezing can delay testing.
- It is the responsibility of the shipper to ensure proper Category B packaging and shipping of potentially infectious and biological substances.
- Specimens should be shipped to be delivered as soon as possible to facilitate testing and recommendations for appropriate treatment.
- Transport of Rabies specimens can be by private citizen, FedEx Express, UPS, Greyhound, Speedy Delivery, the US Postal Service, etc. to:

North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services
Laboratory Services
2635 East Main Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58501

- Arrangements may be made in special circumstances to be delivered to the laboratory after hours or on weekends. Please call Laboratory Services at 701-328-6272 to inquire.
- The State Highway Patrol should not be utilized for specimen transport unless prior arrangements have been made through the State Health Officer, Highway Patrol Superintendent, Disease Control, and the Laboratory.

III. SPECIMEN HANDLING AND RECEIPT

- If samples are being delivered by private citizen, they should be delivered to the west entrance of the building. Please ring the doorbell on the left side of the vestibule.
- Large heads, whole carcasses, and live animals will not be accepted. Arrangements must be made with a veterinarian for euthanization and head or brain removal.
- Rabies forms must be filled out completely. Phone numbers and addresses of physicians, veterinarians, and the submitter need to be included.
- STAT analysis will not be performed.
- Testing of specimens received before 10:30 a.m. each weekday will be completed the same day.
- Testing on specimens received after 10:30 a.m. will be completed the following business day.
- Adherence to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) procedure manual will be strictly enforced.

IV. REPORTING OF RESULTS

- Positive results will be reported to the submitting veterinarian or private citizen immediately. The Disease Control Section will also be notified immediately upon discovery of a positive result and an epidemiologist will contact the involved parties to investigate, counsel, and make recommendations regarding treatment.
- Negative results will be called only if requested and will be either faxed or mailed to the submitter.
- On occasion, inconclusive results occur. These samples will be forwarded on to the CDC for additional testing and the Disease Control Section will be notified immediately for patient follow-up.
- Unsatisfactory specimens will be reported by phone to the submitter, veterinarian, Disease Control, and/or physician.