



State of Louisiana

Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

Protocol for shipping specimens to the Office of Public Health Laboratory for rabies testing (Revised October 18, 2018)

DO NOT SHIP A DECOMPOSED SPECIMEN

- If an animal is euthanized and the head removed, the specimen should be immediately refrigerated. A specimen left at room temperature will decompose significantly after 24 hours. It is highly unlikely that a specimen kept at room temperature for 24 hours (or 3 to 6 hours in warmer temperatures) will be able to yield a valid result. These specimens are certainly in a state of advanced decomposition and should not be submitted for testing.
- Specimens from animals that are dead from causes other than euthanasia (gunshot, blunt trauma, natural causes) should be refrigerated promptly. Specimens from carcasses that have been left at room temperature for over 24 hours (or greater than 3 to 6 hours in warmer temperatures) should also not be submitted.
- If the animal is obviously decomposed and has a foul smell it should not be submitted to the lab. A decomposed specimen will be rejected.

DO NOT SHIP THE WHOLE ANIMAL

- **Whole or live animals will not be accepted.** As a general rule, if the animal will fit into the palm of your hand then the entire animal may be submitted. For all others, please submit only the head. Please make sure that bats are not alive when shipped.
- Animals should be humanely euthanized without damaging the head and the head must be removed from the body and submitted intact for necropsy and examination.

SUBMISSION AND PACKAGING

- All material collected for rabies diagnosis are to be considered infectious, and appropriate handling and shipping precautions should be taken in order to ensure the safety of the collector/submitter, transportation carriers, laboratory staff and the public at large in accordance with 49 CFR Department of Transportation Regulations.
- Specimens should be submitted to the laboratory promptly and at a cold temperature to reduce the decomposition of the animals. **Use frozen cold packs only. Do not use "wet" ice when shipping specimens.** "Wet" ice may leak through the container. A leaking package may result in rejection of the specimen.
- Keep the specimen cold but not frozen. A frozen specimen will delay testing, possibly one full day.

Note: If specimens will be delayed due to some unforeseen circumstance or at the recommendation of OPH officials, these specimens can be frozen. Please contact the OPH Laboratory for instructions (225-219-5252).

- Check all specimens for flea infestations. If there is a notable problem then the animal should be sprayed or dusted for fleas and ticks with a pesticide prior to packaging.

- When packaging rabies specimens, wear disposable gloves. All diagnostic specimens must be clearly labeled with a health department or animal control internal number or unique identifier of some type, along with the animal species. Specimens must be triple packaged (explained below).

SUGGESTED MATERIALS FOR USE AND PROPER HANDLING

- Primary Container (Package # 1 and 2): Place each specimen in double Ziplock bags or heavy-duty garbage bags appropriately sized for the specimens. **Please drain all samples before packaging** them to prevent the pooling of blood in the bag. An absorbent material (absorbent pads, paper towels, etc.) may be placed in the interior bag to prevent blood and body fluids from leaking, but the sample should still be drained prior to packaging. If sharp objects such as shattered bone protrude from the specimen, wrap the specimen in several layers of newspaper. Always tightly seal or fasten the primary container to contain the specimen. **PLEASE LABEL ALL SAMPLES PROPERLY.**
- Rigid shipping container (Package # 3): If shipping via a state contacted courier, a cooler or thick walled Styrofoam container with or without an exterior fiberboard liner may be used as the shipping container. It should also be clearly labeled "Rabies" with permanent marker. The primary container (Package # 1 and 2, the double bags) is placed inside the shipping container along with sufficient frozen cool packs and cushion material to prevent damage to the specimen during transport. If shipping via commercial companies such as FedEx or UPS, follow courier's regulations for shipping Biological Substance Category B UN-3373. **DO NOT SHIP VIA U.S. POSTAL SERVICE!!!**

Note: *When shipping more than one specimen in this container, each specimen must be individually double-bagged and have a separate submission form attached to each set of primary containers for each animal. Make sure that the submission form and unique identifier for each animal is securely attached to the correct sample.*

- Place the completed Rabies Submission Form(s) (Rabies Cases Investigation Worksheet) in a separate plastic Ziplock bag and attach to the outside of the primary container (Package # 1 and 2). If a Styrofoam container inside a fiberboard box is used, and if there is only ONE SPECIMEN in the container, place the plastic Ziplock bagged lab form on top of the closed inner container/box, close the outer container, and secure with packaging tape.

EXAMPLE OF SHIPPING LABEL ON NEXT PAGE:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitter name: • Submitter address: • Submitter city, state, zip code: • Contact person: • Phone: 	<p>BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana DHH OPH Laboratory Virology/Serology Section 1209 Leesville Avenue Baton Rouge, LA 70802 • ATTN: DeNcen Grant (225) 219-5252 • REFRIGERATE ON ARRIVAL • Animal Specimen for Rabies Testing 	