

Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL)
Department of Health and Human Services
221 State Street, Station 12
Augusta, ME 04333

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING SPECIMENS FOR RABIES TESTING

I. TESTING CRITERIA

Animals under suspicion of rabies that have potentially exposed a human or domestic animal to its saliva will be accepted for rabies testing as part of statewide surveillance. Members of the public may request rabies testing at a cost of \$150.00 per test. For consultation to determine if testing is necessary for public health purposes, contact the Division of Infectious Disease Epi-on-Call at **1-800-821-5821**.

II. SPECIMEN PREPARATION

1. HETL does not accept live animals.
2. If a bat requires testing, the entire body may be submitted.
3. With the exception of bats, all animals should be decapitated by veterinarians or trained personnel. Take care to keep the animal's head intact. Always handle the specimen with waterproof gloves and proper protective equipment.
4. If the specimen can not be transported to HETL immediately, refrigerate the specimen (Do not freeze!).
5. Fresh specimen is required. Rabies testing cannot be performed on decomposed animals.
6. Do not place specimen in formalin.

III. PACKAGING

1. If specimen has sharp protruding parts (i.e., porcupine quills or shattered bones), wrap in several layers of newspaper.
2. Place specimen in two (2) leak proof plastic bags.
3. Place bagged specimen in an insulated container (Styrofoam box) along with refrigerant packs. Neither containers nor animals can be returned. Close container securely with tape.
4. Complete Rabies Submission Form (include complete mailing address) and attach to the container exterior. Note all animal and persons potentially exposed to animal to be tested.
5. Payment of \$150 cash or check made out to "Treasurer of State" must accompany animals when testing is deemed not necessary for public health purposes.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

1. Send specimen by: Personal carrier, UPS, Federal Express.
2. The transportation fee must be pre-paid. The specimen should reach the lab within one day.
3. Specimens may be delivered Monday – Friday, 7:30 am – 5:00 pm. For after-hours delivery, contact Capitol Security (287-4357) for admittance. A phone is available inside the main entrance of the DHHS building at 221 State Street.

V. TEST RESULTS

1. For specimens received by 11:00 am, Monday – Friday, results are available by late afternoon the same day. The primary person ("Send Report to :") listed on the submission form is informed of test results by phone. In the event of a positive test, public health officials act immediately to advise persons involved of necessary measures to prevent the spread of rabies.
2. For specimens received after 11:00 am, results are available the next business day.
3. Urgent requests are handled on a case-by-case basis by calling 1-800-8215821.