

Rabies Specimen Acceptance Criteria

1. Any mammal suspected of having rabies may be sent to the laboratory for examination. Unless circumstances suggest rabies infection, caged rodents such as hamsters, etc., should not be submitted for rabies testing. Specimens will be accepted from, and results reported to, any individual. Before submission, though, the state health department should be consulted. (See #6)
2. **NO LIVE ANIMALS WILL BE ACCEPTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**
3. Specimen Preparation:
 - a. **DO NOT** club or shoot the animal in the head. The skull must remain intact.
 - b. **All larger animals must be decapitated before sending to the laboratory** (see attached notice). The Public Health laboratories prefer all animal heads to be removed prior to submission; however, both the Central Lab in Montgomery as well as the Mobile Division Laboratory will accept the entire bodies of small animals that are less than 20 inches in length and 15 pounds in weight.
 - c. Remove the head from the animal low enough to leave the salivary gland intact. **DO NOT DAMAGE THE BRAIN.**
 - d. Specimens should be placed under refrigerated conditions immediately. **NOTE:** Freezing is NOT recommended. Freezing should be used only in unavoidable delays. Frozen specimens delay testing. In addition, frozen and thawed tissue is considered not as satisfactory.
 - e. The specimen should be fresh. The test will not be performed if the brain tissue is decomposed or infested with maggots.
 - f. Spray specimens with an insecticide before submitting for rabies testing. Ticks and fleas are a problem for the analyst during autopsy.
 - g. **DO NOT** send specimens in formalin. The test cannot be performed on formalized tissues.
 - h. Place the head in a water-tight container, such as a clean paint can, and seal tightly. Place the container in a large water-tight container such as a Styrofoam ice chest and pack in enough wet ice or ice packs to last 24 hours. **THE SHIPPER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE THE PACKAGE DOES NOT LEAK.** The outside of the package should be clearly labeled “Rabies Specimen.”
 - i. Every specimen must be accompanied by a completed “Rabies Testing Report Form” (Form BCL-264, an example of the form can be found under Forms in this Manual). All information requested must be supplied. These forms may be obtained through the county health department or the central and division laboratories. Please keep the report form dry and uncontaminated by placing it in a plastic bag and include it in the shipping container, but not in contact with the specimen itself. If shipping more than one specimen, ALL specimens must be

clearly identified or identifiable so there can be no mistake of which animal exposed which victim.

4. Notify your County Health Department Environmentalist that you have a specimen for rabies testing. He or she may be able to send the specimen for you. Otherwise, specimens should be delivered immediately to the State Health Laboratory nearest you or specimens may be accepted and shipped by commercial courier. **DO NOT send by U.S. Mail**

Montgomery Central Lab
8140 University Drive
Montgomery, AL 36130
Phone: 334-260-3400
Fax: 334-244-5083

Mobile Division Lab
757 Museum Drive
Mobile, AL 36608
Phone: 251-344-6049
Fax: 251-344-6895

5. Notify the laboratory in advance when and how the specimen is being sent and the expected time of arrival. If you are unable to reach the laboratory in your area, call the Montgomery Central Laboratory (334-260-3400).
6. All rabies reports will be telephoned and confirmed with a written report.

(Note: Results of test performed on weekends and holidays will be given to licensed physicians or emergency room personnel only.)

Specimens arriving at the laboratory by 11:00 am on weekdays will be reported on the same day. Otherwise, the report will go out the next scheduled workday. (Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays are not scheduled workdays.)

7. Rabies testing on weekends and holidays will be performed only in cases of high probability of human infection in which it is deemed that immediate test results are needed. The attending physician can request a test to be performed on Saturday, Sunday, or holidays by contacting the ADPH Epidemiology Division.
8. For questions regarding exposures, the need for post-exposure treatment, sources of rabies immunoglobulin, and human diploid cell vaccine contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Epidemiology Division at 1-800-338-8374 (24 hour service).