



State of Louisiana
Department of Health and Hospitals
Center for Community and Preventive Health

**Protocol for Shipping Specimens to the Office of Public Health (OPH) Laboratory
for Rabies Testing (December 6, 2013)**

SHIPPING THROUGH OPH PERSONNEL ONLY

- All animal control agencies, veterinary clinics, individual veterinarians, or members of the public that ship animals or animal parts to the state laboratory will be responsible for transporting the specimen to the laboratory, unless the specimen is transferred to and accepted by an employee of the OPH, Department of Health and Hospitals prior to shipment.

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 off of ice for greater than 24 hours at room temperature or greater than three (3) to six (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 also be refrigerated promptly. Specimens from carcasses that have been left at room temperature for over 24 hours or greater than three to six hours in warmer temperatures should also not be submitted.

DO NOT SHIP THE WHOLE ANIMAL!

- Unless the weight of the animal is less than or equal to five pounds (lbs.), whole live animals will not be accepted. The entire body of small mammals such as bats, mice, squirrels, etc. may be submitted.
- 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 cold to reduce 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, these specimens can be frozen. Please contact the OPH Laboratory for instructions (318-221-0859).
- All specimens 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 identifier and the animal species. Specimens must be triple packaged:
 - Suggested Materials for Use and Proper Handling
 - 1) Primary Container: Ziplock bags or heavy-duty garbage bags appropriately sized for the specimens with an absorbent material (absorbent pads, paper towels, etc.) placed in the bag to prevent blood and body fluid from leaking. If sharp objects protrude from the specimen such as shattered bone, wrap the specimen in several layers of newspaper. Always tightly seal or fasten the primary container to contain the specimen.
 - 2) Secondary Container: A metal can, heavy plastic pail with a lid or a heavy-duty plastic garbage bag may be used as the secondary container. These must also be sealed to help prevent leakage of blood or body fluid. The submission form must be enclosed in a plastic bag (ziplock), and taped to the outside of the secondary container.
 - 3) Rigid Shipping Container: The Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) has provided local health departments with coolers labeled “Rabies”. If a cooler is not available then a tightly sealed, 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 secondary container is placed inside the shipping container along with sufficient frozen cool packs and cushioning material to prevent damage to the specimen during transport. Note: When shipping more than one specimen in this container, each specimen must be individually bagged and placed in secondary containers along with a separate submission form for each animal attached.
 - The outside of the container should be cleaned with a disinfectant (Ex. 10 % bleach: nine (9) parts water and one (1) part household bleach). This will reduce risk of exposure of a potentially positive specimen to anyone handling this package.

- Secure the shipping container (snap lid or tape) for transport and address the package.
 - OPH Public Health Laboratory
533 Vine Street
P. O. Box 3561 (71133-3561)
Shreveport, LA 71101
Attn: Rabies