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## RABIES TESTING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Revised January 2024

### TYPES OF SPECIMENS

**PLEASE NOTE: BURIED ANIMALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR TESTING.**

OLS will accept the following specimen types for Rabies testing:

- Small animals such as bats or small rodents.  
*NOTE: For the safety of the staff, the sender must ensure that smaller animals are deceased before shipping the specimen to the OLS Rabies Unit.*
- Severed head of **moderate-sized** animal such as cat, dog, or raccoon.
- Brain only (cerebellum and brainstem are REQUIRED) of larger size animals such as a cow, horse, pig, or deer.

OLS recommends the services of a veterinarian or county health official be used to sever the heads or to remove the brains of suspect animals. Private citizens should not attempt to remove animal heads.

### SPECIMEN SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Notify the OLS Rabies Unit in advance regarding submission of specimen. It is important to inform the technician what type of exposure was involved (human or pet).
- Only the head of the specimen will be accepted for testing.
- Specimens MUST be received within 7 days of animal death.
- More than one specimen can be shipped in the same box. Each specimen MUST be packaged separately so that leakage does not occur. Each specimen MUST be



labeled with a unique identification. Make sure to note the unique ID on the submission form.

- Complete all the required information LEGIBLY on the Rabies Test Request/Specimen Submission Form.
- No living animals will be accepted for Rabies testing.
- Specimens brought to the OLS after work hours can be placed in the refrigerator located in the building outside the back parking lot. The Rabies Unit MUST be notified to receive further instructions. (**SEE RABIES CONTACT INFORMATION**)

### **RABIES SPECIMEN COLLECTION KITS**

OLS offers two sizes of specimen mailing boxes with our collection kits. These kits are provided to County Health Departments, veterinarian clinics, WV Department of Natural Resources, and other approved submitters. Each collection kit contains the following:

1. **PLASTIC BAGS (2)**: Specimen should be placed in a plastic bag and then placed in the second bag to ensure that no fluids will contaminate the box or leak out of the container.
2. **VINYL ZIPPER BAG**: Double bagged specimen should be placed in the zipper bag to serve as added to protection against any leaks.
3. **ICE PACKS (2)**: Two refrigerants or ice packs should be placed in zipper bag near specimen. Placing the ice packs in the zipper bag will ensure that any leakage will be contained if the refrigerants were to rupture. DO NOT use regular wet ice!
4. **TEST REQUEST/SUBMISSION FORM**: Please provide all information requested on the Test Request/Specimen Submission form. When completed, the form should be placed on the lid of the mailing box, away from the specimen.
5. **OUTER MAILING BOX**: The outer box has a white label which states: PROPERTY OF THE OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES/167 11<sup>th</sup> AVENUE/SOUTH CHARLESTON, WV 25303.
6. **PRE-ADDRESSED LABEL**: After the specimen is properly packaged, the box should be taped closed and the pre-addressed label should be affixed to the outside of the box.

7. **UN3373 LABEL:** Affix the 'UN3373 Biological Substance, Category B' specimen label to the outside of the box.

*NOTE: Newspaper or other absorbent material may be used to prevent smaller samples from shifting inside the container. **DO NOT USE STYROFOAM PEANUTS OR SHREDDED PAPER TO PACK SPECIMEN.** In the event of a specimen leak, the peanuts or shredded paper would pose a larger contamination threat to the staff.*

### **SHIPPING**

Rabies specimens are considered 'Category B' and are to be shipped following IATA Packing Instruction 650. All specimens packaged as directed in the provided Rabies Mailing Box can be sent by FedEx, the United States Postal Service (USPS), or United Parcel Services (UPS). The shipper is responsible for shipping costs. Please note that biohazard labels must NOT be placed on the outside of shipping box.

<p><b>OLS DOES NOT ACCEPT WEEKEND OR HOLIDAY DELIVERIES FROM FEDEX, UPS OR USPS.</b></p>
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### **VACCINATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

For any questions regarding vaccination recommendations, please contact the DIVISION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY at (304) 558-5358 -or- 1-800-423-1271 (In West Virginia only).

## **RABIES UNIT CONTACT INFORMATION**

*Address* | 167 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
South Charleston, WV 25303

*Hours* | Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm  
(OLS observes all State and Federal holidays)

*Phone* | 304-558-3530 extension 20135

*After Hours Cell Phone* | 304-550-9882

(NOTE: This number is **only** valid during weekends and holidays.)

*Fax* | 304-558-2006

*Web* | <https://dhhr.wv.gov/ols/labs/Pages/Rabies.aspx>

## **REFERENCES**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>)
- Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology  
(<https://oeps.wv.gov/rabies/pages/default.aspx>).  
304-558-5358