

MVDL Rabies Sampling & Submission Guidelines

Rabies is a highly infectious and if untreated, fatal disease. All cases for testing should be considered infectious and protecting oneself from inadvertent exposure is imperative. Trained and preferably vaccinated individuals, such as veterinarians, should collect and handle specimens for testing from potentially infected animals. Call the laboratory (see below), a veterinarian or a local public health official or reference Centers of Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) guidelines on our website www.liv.mt.gov/content/lab/CDC_Sample_Collection before risking exposure.

Specimens:

- **FRESH BRAIN TISSUE ONLY – DO NOT PLACE SPECIMEN IN FORMALIN OR OTHER FIXATIVE:**
 - **Small animals** - e.g. dogs, cats and skunks: decapitated head with entire, intact brain in skull.
 - **Large animals** - e.g. horses and cows: entire, intact brain including the cerebellum and brain stem.
 - **Other small mammals** - e.g. bats and mice: entire carcass.
- All specimens can and will be tested; however specimen integrity will be noted in result interpretation.
- Samples should not be frozen as this may interfere with interpretation.
- If additional disease investigation is needed, call the laboratory for instructions.

Materials Needed:

- Personal protective items as recommended by veterinarian, MVDL personnel, public health official or CDC.
- Sealable plastic bags, e.g. Ziploc®-type freezer bags.
- Indelible marker (e.g. Sharpie® pen).
- Absorbent material to place in shipping container.
- Insulated shipping container.
- 1-3 frozen gel packs.
- MVDL SV-43 Submission Form available at our website www.LIV.MT.gov.

Packaging:

1. Place each specimen in a plastic bag; securely seal and place in second plastic bag and securely seal.
2. Individually identify all specimen or animal bags to match submission form.
3. If submitting multiple animals, individually bag and identify animals.
4. Place enough absorbent material in insulated shipping container to prevent exterior contamination.
5. Place specimen on 1-3 ice packs for shipping (depending on size of specimen and weather).
6. Complete submission form in its entirety and place in a separate sealed plastic bag.
7. Seal insulated shipping container.
8. Samples should be shipped the same day of collection; if this is not possible, refrigerate.

Sending:

- Submissions may be sent via U.S. Postal Service, Fed Ex, UPS, commercial bus or hand delivered.
- US mail is picked up on Saturday by the lab; Fed-Ex & UPS do NOT deliver to the lab on Saturday or Sunday. If samples will arrive any time other than M-F or are being sent on a bus, contact the lab.
- Shipping costs will not be assumed by the laboratory.

To ship via U.S. Postal Service: Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab P.O. Box 997 Bozeman, MT 59771-0997	To ship via Fed-Ex or UPS: Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab 1911 W. Lincoln Bozeman, MT 59718	Submission / Testing Questions: Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab Virology Section 406-994-6350 After Hours 406-581-4172
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Testing & Results:

- Specimens received by 10 A.M. will be tested the day received.
- Results are usually available after 3 P.M.
- The submitter will be notified via phone regarding results unless otherwise requested.
- See our website for current testing costs.
- Carcass disposal fees will be assessed and are weight dependent except for bats and small rodents.

