

RABIES SPECIMEN SUBMISSION POLICY

HOURS OF OPERATION

The MDH Laboratories Administration Rabies Laboratory operates from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday except on holidays. Specimens must be received at the MDH Laboratories Administration by 12:00 PM Monday through Fridays to have the test results reported by 4:30 PM on the same day. Specimens received on Monday through Fridays after 12:00 PM will have the results ready the next regular workday. Specimens received Monday through Friday from 12:00 PM to 4:30 PM, on a weekend, or on a state holiday will be processed and reported the next regular workday. Except for situations that require test results as soon as possible so that a medical determination about rabies PEP can be made (emergency examination). In these situations, prior approval by epidemiology staff in the MDH Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau (IDEORB) is necessary before testing will be initiated by on-call laboratory scientists. (For details, please refer to Emergency Examination Requests section below).

DELIVERY PROCEDURES

Delivery of specimens must be from Monday through Friday 7:30AM to 6:00PM (regular workdays) to the MDH Laboratories Administration Loading Dock. All animal submission of specimen must be routed through the local health department and sent via courier service. Do not use the U.S. Postal Service or other public transportation service to send specimens. (For emergency examination situations, please see the Emergency Examination Requests section below).

ORDERING TESTS

For routine testing Monday through Friday, all local health departments must use the MDH Laboratories Administration's Lab Web Portal (LWP) <https://prod.labwebportal.com/mdlabs> for submission of specimens. After entering the specimen information in LWP, the Animal Rabies Examination Submission Form should be printed and must be attached to a bag containing the specimen being submitted. A submission form must accompany each bag containing an animal being submitted and then placed into a leakproof cooler. If access to LWP is not possible, specimens approved for emergency testing must be accompanied by a fully completed handwritten Rabies Submission Form. An emergency contact name and phone number must be listed on the Rabies Submission Form. The Rabies Submission Form (DHMH 1188 08/17) can be downloaded from our website at <https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/Pages/Rabies-Animal-DFA-Submission.aspx>

CRITERIA FOR ANIMAL SUBMISSION

Live animals will **NOT** be accepted in the laboratory. Terrestrial animals acceptable for submission to MDH are rabies vector species (e.g., raccoons, foxes, skunks, etc.) that expose humans, livestock, or pets. Exposure is defined as a bite that breaks the skin or contact of mucous membranes or broken skin with either animal saliva or nervous tissue. Birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians will not be accepted for rabies testing under any circumstances. Small rodents, including squirrels, chipmunks, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters, rabbits, mice, rats, voles, shrews and moles, will not be accepted for testing unless prior approval for testing has been authorized by the MDH IDEOR epidemiology staff. Most recent human cases of rabies in the U.S. have been associated with bats, and bat bites may be difficult to recognize. Bats should be submitted for testing in all cases of direct human contact with a bat or when the bite and/or mucous membrane contact cannot be ruled out. Live animals will **NOT** be accepted in the laboratory.

Please note: Horse and cow heads should be submitted to the Maryland Department of Agriculture for brain tissue extraction.

EMERGENCY EXAMINATION REQUESTS

Some situations that occur after regular business hours may require rabies test results as soon as possible so that a medical determination about rabies PEP can be made. In these situations, on-call laboratory scientists are available; and specimens may be examined Fridays from 12:00 PM to 4:30 PM, on a weekend or on a state holiday, with prior approval from the MDH Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau staff. To reach the epidemiology staff during regular business hours, contact the MDH Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases (CZVBD) at 410-767-5649 (main); 410-767-6703 (MDH State Public Health Veterinarian); 410-767-8712 (CZVBD staff). After hours, call the MDH IDEORB Epidemiologist-On-Call # 410-795-7365.

After receiving approval for an emergency examination request, please contact the rabies lab scientist on-call # 443-735-1291. For back up purposes only, contact one of the following MDH Laboratories Administration staff (**in the order listed below**) to arrange for testing and appropriate submission. (NOTE In addition to the rabies submission form, the specimen should be accompanied by the submitter's after-hours contact information to receive results).

1.) Rabies Lab Scientist On-Call No: 443-735-1291

- 2) Rabies Laboratory Manager: 443-764-7929
- 3) Division of Virology and Immunology Chief:
- 4) OLEPR or BT Coordinator: 410-925-3121
- 5) Laboratory Director: 443-928-0925

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

Animals should be euthanized in a manner that will not destroy the brain tissues to be examined in the diagnosis of rabies. When possible, only the animal's head should be submitted for diagnostic purposes. For animals weighing more than 20lbs, particularly large dogs, only the head should be submitted for testing. If an animal is being submitted to MDH Labs from an animal pathology or diagnostic laboratory, and the animal has already been prepared for necropsy, the submitter should submit all or a cross section of the brainstem and half of the cerebrum.

Please note: Horse and cow heads should be submitted to the Maryland Department of Agriculture for brain tissue extraction.

PACKAGING AND SHIPPING

- All rabies specimens must be placed into coolers that are clearly marked as rabies coolers. No other specimens should be placed in rabies coolers, otherwise these specimens will be rejected.
- Rabies coolers must fully close and must be leak/waterproof.
- There should be NO blood stains on the exterior of the cooler.
- Each specimen must be individually packaged in a leak-proof bag and clearly labeled.
- Each specimen must be accompanied by a Rabies Submission Form for proper identification.
- Rabies Submission Forms should be filled out correctly and legibly including exposure type using LWP.
- Coolers should be shipped with ice or ice packs, but the ice should not occupy more than 1/3 of the cooler.
- Submitters should provide clear labeling for bat submissions. Live bats will **NOT** be accepted in the laboratory.
- Submitters should avoid freezing specimens. If frozen specimens are received, testing will be delayed.
- No trash should be included in rabies coolers.
- Animal rabies packaging and training video available at <https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/Pages/Rabies-Animal-DFA-Submission.aspx>.