

Rabies Testing

Procedures for Specimen Submission

What You Need to KNOW

- There is no charge for rabies testing.
- Rabies testing is performed by our department's Public Health Laboratory (PH Lab), located in Downey, CA. The test is Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA) testing on brain tissue.
- Only the head may be accepted for rabies testing (except bats), even for small kittens. The reason is that our PH Lab is not equipped to perform decapitation, and has minimal capacity to dispose of carcasses and excess tissue.
- **Healthy domestic animals that have bitten a human are not to be euthanized during the quarantine period.** Allowing such testing would overwhelm our PH Lab.
- Gravely ill or injured domestic animals that have bitten a human **may be euthanized** during the quarantine period for humane reasons. In these cases the head of the animal must be submitted appropriately for rabies testing.
- If submitting a bat for testing – submit the whole body. After rabies testing, the body is forwarded to a state laboratory for species identification.
- The head (or bat body) should be refrigerated, not frozen. If the sample is accidentally frozen, testing is still possible, but will be delayed.
- Specimen preparation, including decapitation, must be performed by the facility submitting the sample. Only rabies-vaccinated staff should perform the decapitation.
- Packaged specimens that are dripping blood, have animal faces visible through the packaging, or that contain live fleas or ticks may be rejected.

What You Need to DO

1. Refrigerate deceased animals to be tested for rabies. **DO NOT FREEZE.**
2. Complete the appropriate Bite Report Form (or other rabies-related form, see pages 45-47).
3. Assign rabies –vaccinated staff to sever the head from the body. Submit only the head for testing. (Exception: for bats, do not decapitate – submit the entire body).
4. Wrap the animal head (or bat body) in newspaper or other absorbent material. Place it in a plastic, leakproof bag. Then place it a second plastic bag .
5. Place the double-bagged specimen into an opaque or non-transparent outer container (e.g. box or firm opaque plastic bag). Add ice pack. Seal shut.
6. Attach a copy of a completed Bite Report Form (or other rabies-related form) on the outside of the container.
7. Fax a copy of the completed reporting form to us at (213) 481-2375 and then call our office (213) 989-7060 to request transportation of the specimen to the PH Lab for testing.

