

Submitting Rabies Specimens to SHL Coralville Laboratory

The Laboratory accepts **intact heads** for animals > 1 pounds (severed at the shoulder blades) **or whole animals under 1 pound**. Whole animals over 1 pound are unacceptable. For cows, horses, sheep, and goats the lab only accepts the **brain and brain stem**. Live bats **MUST** be hand delivered to the lab or euthanized by a veterinarian prior to transport.

For questions determining human exposure, or in cases where a physician or veterinarian are not available, please contact Iowa Health and Human Services – Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE), 1-800-362-2736. SHL will only report results to a veterinarian, physician, or public health practitioner.

REMEMBER TO NOTIFY THE RABIES LAB OF YOUR SUBMISSION!

Emergency Testing of Specimens

Testing is performed Monday – Friday. For emergency weekend testing, **you must receive prior approval** from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Call 1-800-362-2736 for consultation. IAHHHS will communicate emergency testing needs to the SHL Rabies On-Call Staff.

If the specimen **cannot be delivered to the lab by 12:00 pm on Saturday, special arrangements must be made. Do not deliver rabies specimens to SHL outside of normal business hours unless approved by SHL Rabies Staff. Specimens are not received on Sundays.**

1. Keep Specimen Chilled

Have a qualified person separate the head from the body as soon as possible after death. Avoid damage to the brain, as it may compromise testing.

Immediately chill the specimen to between 36°F and 46° F (2°C – 8°C). Do not freeze the specimen. Freezing will delay test results and may damage the brain tissue.

Specimen should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Do not freeze.



2. Package Specimens

Place the specimen in a sealable, leakproof storage bag. Put the sealed specimen bag inside a second, larger sealable bag. Place the double bagged specimen inside a third, larger sealable bag. Triple bag larger animal heads in three appropriately sized plastic bags that can be securely sealed to prevent leaks.

If more than one specimen is sent in a submission package, attach an identification number name to the outside of each triple-sealed plastic bag.

Edited January 21, 2025

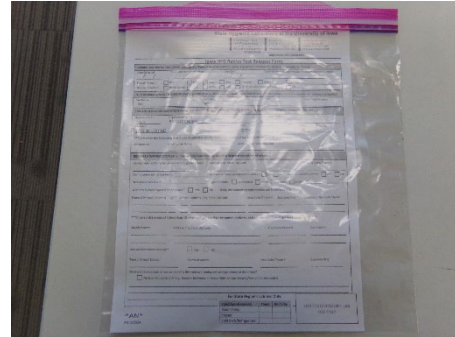


3. Complete Rabies Test Request Form(s)

Provide the required information on a **separate Rabies Test Request Form for every specimen**. Place the completed form(s) in a sealable plastic bag to keep them dry.

The specimen identification information on the submission form(s) **must exactly match** the identification information on the specimen(s).

Place form(s) in a leakproof bag.



4. Prepare Mailing Container

Obtain an insulated container strong enough to withstand shipment, such as a polystyrene cooler box inside a cardboard box. **Do not use packing peanuts as they are not absorbent.**

Use gel packs or similar refrigerants to keep specimens cold. Avoid using ice as it is a common cause of leaks.

5. Add and Secure Specimen

Place the specimen(s) into the cooler box. Surround the specimens with refrigerant. Use enough refrigerant to ensure the specimen remain chilled for at least 48 hours, especially during the summer. **Do not use dry ice.**

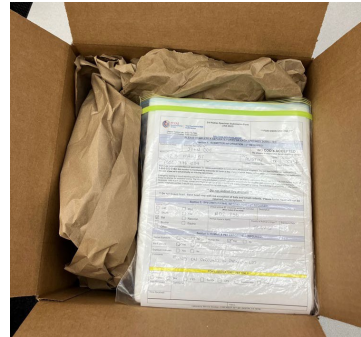
Place additional absorbent packing material on top of the specimen. Add enough packaging to prevent the specimens from moving in transit. Filling the remaining gaps in the container also helps to better insulate the specimen. Do not put the TEST REQUEST FORM IN WITH SPECIMEN. It could get wet and become unreadable.

Secure the cooler lid in place.



6. Prepare Outer Container

Place the submission form(s) in a sealed zip lock bag on top of the cooler - in the outer container. Place the cooler box in a sturdy box (outer container). Fill any gaps with packing material to secure the cooler box in place to prevent movement.



7. Label Outer Container

Label the outside of the shipping container with the provided label from the test request form.

Provide the **submitter's name and address** as the return address. Write the submitter's contact phone number under the return address. **The outer container must have the UN3373 Category B label.**



8. Notify Lab of Specimen Submission

Call 319-335-4335 during normal business hours, Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, and Saturday, 9 am to 12 pm. Outside of normal business hours, call 319-335-4500 or 800-421-IOWA and ask to be connected with the Rabies on-call staff.

Notification is critical for laboratory staff to monitor specimen arrivals and to notify submitters if they do not arrive as expected.

9. Specimen Delivery to Lab

A private vehicle is the most efficient means of delivery to the lab. If you must use commercial courier services (FedEx or UPS), place the bagged test request form in the outermost shipper; ensure next day delivery and use shipment tracking. If the animal does not arrive at the lab the next day, you will be responsible to track it. If shipping on Friday for Saturday delivery, you **MUST** request guaranteed Saturday morning delivery. If you do not request this, the delivery will be delayed until the next available workday.

Specimens should be chilled between 36°F–46°F (2°C–8°C) over the weekend or holiday and be shipped for delivery the next regular workday.

Specimens are accepted at the lab's specimen receiving window during regular business hours, Mon – Fri 8 am to 5 pm, and Saturday 9 am to 12 pm. Specimens are not received outside of normal business hours. Do not leave any

specimen at the lab without handing it directly to an employee. For directions visit <http://www.shl.uiowa.edu>.

Remember

- Keep the specimen chilled between 36°F and 46° F (2°C and 8°C).
- **Do not freeze.**
- Submit a completed the **Rabies Test Request Form** for each specimen.
- Pack the specimen(s) in a **double container**. Line the innercontainer with newspaper, or other absorbent packing material.
- Use gel packs or similar refrigerants for shipping. **Do not use dry ice**. Use of wet ice is not recommended.
- Make sure the Rabies test request form is in a plastic bag on top of the inner shipping container – **not in with the specimen**.
- Make sure the outer container is labeled with the **Rabies Specimen Label** provided with the Test Request Form.
- Notify the lab of your specimen submission by calling 319-335-4335.
- For emergency testing outside of normal business hours or help determining human exposure, contact Iowa HHS at 1-800-362-2736