

Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL)
Department of Health and Human Services
221 State Street, Station 12
Augusta, ME 04333

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING SPECIMENS FOR RABIES TESTING

TESTING CRITERIA

Animals under suspicion of rabies that have potentially exposed a human or domestic animal to its saliva will be accepted for rabies testing as part of statewide surveillance. In cases where public health purposes do not seem warranted, HETL will perform testing for a fee of \$150.00. For consultation to determine if testing is necessary for public health purposes or will require the cost of \$150.00, contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at **1-800-821-5821**.

I. SPECIMEN PREPARATION

A. Bats

- a. HETL does not accept live bats for testing.
- b. If a bat requires testing, the entire body must be submitted.
- c. In instances where the bat cannot be transported to HETL immediately, the specimen must be placed in refrigeration. In cases where refrigeration is unavailable, freezing of the specimen is acceptable. **DO NOT FREEZE LIVE BATS**
- d. Fresh specimen is required, decomposed animals will be reported as “Unsatisfactory for testing”.
- e. Do not place any specimen in formalin.

B. Mammals (other than bats)

- a. HETL does not accept live mammals for testing.
- b. Animals must be decapitated by veterinarians or trained personnel. Take care to keep the animals head intact. Always handle the specimen with liquid impervious gloves and proper protective equipment.
- c. If the specimen cannot be transported to HETL immediately, it is best to refrigerate the sample. In situations where refrigeration is unavailable, you may freeze the specimen.
- d. Fresh specimen is required. Rabies testing cannot be performed on decomposed animals. Decomposed animals will be reported as “Unsatisfactory for testing”.
- e. If submitting just the brain, the whole brain (including Brain Stem and Cerebellum) must be submitted to rule out rabies infection.
- f. Do not place any specimen type in formalin.

II. PACKAGING

A. Bats

- a. If submitting a live bat, please attempt to capture the bat in a clear container (Tupperware). If unable to do so, please mark boldly on the container that it contains a “live bat”. If unsure, it is best to err on the side of caution and mark it as being a “live bat”.
- b. If submitting a deceased bat, please place in container with refrigerant packs (NO ICE).
- c. Complete Rabies Submission Form (include complete mailing address) and attach to the container exterior. Note all animal and persons potentially exposed to animal to be tested.
- d. Payment of \$150 cash or check made out to “Treasurer of State” must accompany animals when testing is deemed not necessary for public health purposes.

B. Mammals (other than bats)

- a. If specimen has sharp protruding parts (i.e., porcupine quills or shattered bones), wrap in several layers of newspaper.

- b. Place specimen into two (2) leak proof plastic bags.
- c. Place bagged specimen in an insulated container (Styrofoam or cardboard box) along with refrigerant packs (NO ICE). Close container securely with tape.
- d. Complete Rabies Submission Form (include complete mailing address) and attach to the container exterior. Note all animal and persons potentially exposed to animal to be tested.
- e. Payment of \$150 cash or check made out to “Treasurer of State” must accompany animals when testing is deemed not necessary for public health purposes.

Neither containers nor animals can be returned once received at HETL

III. TRANSPORTATION

1. Send specimen by: Personal carrier, UPS, Federal Express.
2. The transportation fee must be pre-paid. The specimen should reach the lab within one day.
3. Specimens may be delivered Monday – Friday, 7:30 am – 5:00 pm. For after-hours delivery, contact Capitol Security (**287-4357**) for admittance.

IV. TEST RESULTS

1. Specimens received Monday thru Thursday will be repackaged and submitted to the New Hampshire Public Health Laboratory (NHPHL) until January 2024.
2. Specimens received on Friday will be held until the following business day to be submitted to NHPHL.
3. Upon receiving results from NHPHL, HETL will release results to submitters within 24 hours. For any questions regarding your results, please contact the HETL Rabies Laboratory at **1-207-287-1706**.
4. In the event of a positive test, public health officials act immediately to advise persons involved of necessary measures to prevent the spread of rabies.
5. Urgent requests are handled on a case-by-case basis by calling **1-800-821-5821**.

Revised November 28, 2023