



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

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August 18, 2005

URGENT RABIES TESTING INFORMATION - DO NOT DISCARD!

Dear Submitter:

In September 2004, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Laboratory in Austin and all other rabies laboratories in Texas changed the tissue requirements for rabies testing. Although the new requirements were widely publicized, the DSHS laboratory continues on occasion to receive inadequate specimens. Because some rabies infections can be distributed unilaterally in the brain, **a longitudinal section of the brain and brain stem is no longer an adequate sample and cannot be reported as negative**, even when rabies is not evident in any of the submitted tissues. This may result in unnecessary post-exposure rabies treatment for exposed persons and isolation or destruction of exposed animals.

The **MINIMUM TISSUE REQUIREMENTS** for rabies testing are:

- a complete transverse cross section of the brain stem **AND**
- tissue from one of the following:
 - cerebellum or hippocampus

The **PREFERRED SPECIMENS** for rabies testing are:

- **Small animals**- entire unopened head;
- **Large animals**- entire unopened head or entire brain including brainstem;
- **Bats and small rodents**- entire animal

If you require that a specimen be tested at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) for other diseases in addition to rabies and rabies is high on your list of differentials, please submit either the unopened head or entire brain including brainstem to the DSHS laboratory for **rabies testing first**, since rabies poses the greatest health risk. After collecting the appropriate tissues for rabies testing, DSHS laboratory staff will forward the remaining tissues to the TVMDL **at no additional cost to you for shipping**. Please clearly indicate your desire for additional testing by the TVMDL both on the DSHS Rabies Submission Form and verbally by calling the DSHS rabies laboratory at (512) 458-7595. Include a completed TVMDL submission form, including your contact information and TVMDL account number, with your shipment. You are responsible for any charges incurred at TVMDL. If you consider a diagnosis of rabies unlikely, please submit your specimen directly to the TVMDL and they will forward the appropriate tissues to the DSHS laboratory for rabies testing at no additional cost to you.

For questions about rabies specimen submission or testing, please call the DSHS rabies laboratory at (512) 458-7595 or visit the laboratory's rabies website at http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/rab_main.shtm. You may also contact the DSHS Zoonosis Control Group at (512) 458-7255 or visit their rabies website at <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/zoonosis/diseases/Rabies/>. For questions related to testing at the TVMDL, please contact the TVMDL directly at (979) 845-3414 or visit their website at <http://tvmdlweb.tamu.edu/>.