

Rabies Laboratory – Processing and Reporting

The Texas Department of Health Rabies Laboratory processes rabies specimens on a top priority basis. The laboratory handles approximately 8,000 animal specimens per year for rabies testing. The Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA) test procedures are designed to facilitate rapid reporting. The minimum processing time for an individual specimen from the time of receipt to issuing a report is four (4) hours.

Monday-Friday Routine Testing and Result Reporting: During the week, Monday through Friday, rabies specimens received prior to 8:00 AM are necropsied, tested in duplicate and reported by 5:00 PM the same day. Specimens received after 8:00 AM and prior to 3:00 PM Monday through Thursday are necropsied, then tested the following morning and reported by noon.

Weekend and Holiday Testing and Result Reporting: Specimens received after 8:00 AM and prior to 3:00 PM on Friday are necropsied on Friday. One set of slides is tested on Saturday morning and positive results are reported by noon. The duplicate set of these slides is tested on Monday morning and final negative results are called by noon on Monday. Negative specimens are not normally reported on Saturday. Prior arrangements may be made for preliminary negative results to be reported on Saturday by contacting the rabies laboratory at (512) 458-7595 on Friday.

Routine specimens received after 3:00 PM on Friday or on Saturday or Sunday are not necropsied or tested on the weekend, but do receive priority on Monday morning. They are necropsied first, tested in duplicate, and reported by 5:00 PM that afternoon.

Specimens received prior to 8:00 AM on all holidays except Christmas and Thanksgiving are necropsied in the morning, tested in duplicate, and positive specimens are reported by 5:00 PM that afternoon. Negative specimens are reported the next regular work day. Again, submitters may request a negative report on holidays by calling (512) 458-7595. Specimens received after 8:00 AM on a holiday receive priority the next morning and are reported by 5:00 PM that afternoon.

Individuals may deliver specimens to the Texas Department of Health 24 hours a day. Specimens should be delivered to Specimen Acquisition during normal business hours. After normal business hours, specimens are received by Smith Security personnel. The access gate to the lab dock is closed at these times. Locate the callbox on left side of the gate and push the “call” button. Please wait for security to respond. The security guard will open the gate and provide further instructions. If you are unable to reach security with the callbox, please call security at 512-801-4132 from a cellular phone.

Shipping Rabies Specimens

The bus is still the preferred method of shipment to the TDH Rabies Lab in Austin. Laboratory employees routinely pick up specimens from the bus station on the following schedule (times are approximate):

Monday-Friday	3 pick up times	7:00 AM	10:00 AM	1:30 PM
Saturday	1 pick up time	9:00 AM		
Sunday	1 pick up time	1:00 PM		
Holidays	1 pick up time	7:00 AM		

When using a different delivery service on Thursday or Friday, it is **extremely important** to have a guarantee that the head shipment will be delivered before 5:00 PM on Friday. Shipment by overnight courier is discouraged over the weekend. Heads have decomposed over a weekend because they waited in a hot warehouse until Monday morning to be delivered. It would be better to keep the head refrigerated and then ship it on Monday.

Always include an adequate supply of cold packs to keep the head cold for at least 48 hours. Remember to include more cold packs when shipping a large head, multiple heads, **and** during the hot summer months.

Schedule for Processing and Reporting Rabies Specimens

Received in Necropsy Lab	Necropsied	Tested	Results
Mon-Fri (before 8:00 a.m.)	Same day	Same day	Reported by 5:00 p.m.
Mon-Thurs (8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)	Same day	Next day	Reported by noon the day after receipt
Fri (8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)	Same day	Saturday	Positive results reported by noon on Saturday Negative results reported by noon on Monday ¹
Mon-Thurs (after 3:00 p.m.)	Next morning	Next afternoon	Reported by 5:00 p.m. the day after specimen is received
Fri (after 3:00 p.m.), Sat or Sun ²	Monday	Monday	Reported by 5 p.m. Monday
Holidays ³ (before 8:00 a.m.)	Same day	Same day	Positive results reported by 5 p.m. on the same day Negative results reported the next regular workday ⁴
Holidays (after 8:00 a.m.)	Next regular work day	Next regular work day	Reported by 5 p.m. on the next regular workday

¹ If prior arrangements have been made by calling the rabies lab at (512) 458-7595 on Friday, preliminary negative results will be reported on Saturday.

² Rabies specimens are not processed on Saturday or Sunday unless prior arrangements have been made for emergency testing through Mary Ann Patterson or Dr. Pushker Raj or the Texas Department of Health Physician on Call who judges the situation to be an emergency.

³ The rabies lab is partially staffed on all holidays except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

⁴ If prior arrangements have been made by calling the rabies lab at (512) 458-7595, negative results will be reported on holidays.