



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

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<https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/health-agency/public-health/public-health-laboratory>

SPECIMEN COLLECTION & TRANSPORT INSTRUCTIONS

Animals for Rabies DFA Testing

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory performs rabies virus testing of animal specimens for the county. In most cases, testing is coordinated through the Animal Services Department. It is important to follow the guidelines below for safely securing packaging that contains animals for rabies testing. Individuals handling animals should be aware of the risks and consequences of rabies exposure.

Specimens should be collected and delivered to the laboratory under optimal storage conditions, including keeping the specimen refrigerated during storage and transport. When stored in a cooler, multiple ice packs should be used to maintain refrigerated temperatures. **DO NOT FREEZE.** Frozen specimens cannot be tested until they thaw, which may cause a delay.

For questions about rabies testing, contact the laboratory at (805) 781-5507 and ask to speak with the Laboratory Supervisor or a Microbiologist.

Guidelines

1. No living animals will be accepted for testing.
2. Only veterinarians, animal control officers, or individuals who have been appropriately trained and vaccinated should remove an animal's head for rabies testing. This procedure should be performed in a well-ventilated area using personal protective equipment (PPE).

For Animal Heads

1. Ensure the animal head has stopped bleeding before placing into a plastic bag. Then place the first plastic bag into a second plastic bag and seal it with a rubber band or tape to prevent leakage.
 - If submitting multiple specimens, use separate bags and label the outside of each bag with an identification number that matches the information on the requisition form.
2. Place the double-bagged specimen into an insulated container. Include enough ice packs in the container to keep the specimen cold during transport.
3. Complete the Rabies Testing Form (i.e., requisition).
 - Ensure the contact's name and number are provided on the form.
 - Incomplete requisition forms will delay test results.
4. Place the requisition in a Ziplock bag to prevent contamination and tape to the corresponding specimen bag. Do not use staples.

For Bats or Mouse-sized Mammals

1. Submit the entire animal if it is a bat or a mouse-sized mammal.
2. Submit the animal in a double plastic or Ziplock bag.
3. Place the double-bagged specimen into an insulated container with ice packs to keep the sample cold during transport.
 - If submitting multiple specimens, use separate bags and label the outside of each bag with an identification number that matches the information on the requisition form.
4. Complete the Rabies Testing Form.
 - Ensure contact's name and number are provided on the form.
 - Incomplete requisition forms will delay test results.
5. Place the requisition in a Ziplock bag to prevent contamination and tape to the corresponding specimen bag. Do not use staples.

Weekend on call testing is case by case with strictly enforced prior approval from the Health Officer and Laboratory Director.