

STATE OF COLORADO

Bill Owens, Governor
Douglas H. Benevento, Executive Director

Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

Procedures for the Submission of Laboratory Specimens for Rabies Analysis

BACKGROUND: Two laboratories perform rabies confirmation testing on a fee for service basis in Colorado: the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) and the Colorado State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (CSU). CDPHE charges \$65 per specimen for rabies testing. Contact CSU (970-297-1281) for their submission protocol and pricing.

SPECIMENS TO SUBMIT: Due to the low incidence of rabies in Colorado, testing of domestic animals (dogs, cats, ferrets, livestock, etc.) is usually indicated only for animals involved in human exposure. Appropriate wildlife specimens are carnivorous, terrestrial mammal and bats involved in human or domestic pet exposure. Bats, skunks or wildlife exhibiting neurological symptoms may be submitted for surveillance purposes. Rabies testing is rarely ever indicated for rodents and rabbits.

SPECIMEN PREPARATION: For bats the entire animal should be sent. For dogs, cats, skunks, raccoons and similarly sized animals, **only the head must be sent**. For livestock, the brain should be removed and submitted. Persons should use adequate procedures and protective equipment to protect them from exposure to rabies virus while remove heads or brains. Specimens must be refrigerated immediately and held at 35-40°F until shipped. **DO NOT FREEZE OR PLACE THE SPECIMEN IN A PRESERVATIVE SUCH AS FORMALIN.**

SHIPMENT: Local health departments and animal control agencies can be contacted for lab forms and assistance in specimen submission. Specimens should be double-bagged in plastic, sealed in an inner waterproof container with cold packs (no dry or wet ice) to insure no leakage occurs during shipment, then placed in an outer shipping container. A Lab Requisition Form #272 must accompany each specimen. Each specimen requires a separate form and must be clearly labeled with the specimen number. Packages should be shipped by overnight delivery to: **Colorado Department of Public Health; Attn: Virology Lab; 8100 Lowry Blvd; Denver, CO 80230-6928.**

TEST RESULTS AND CONSULTATION: Rabies testing is conducted on every regular business day; specimens received before 11 a.m. are processed that day. Specimens received after 11 a.m. are run the following workday except in incidents with high-risk human exposure. Positive rabies tests are telephoned immediately; negative results are reported by mail or can be obtained by calling the lab.

Laboratory & Test Results: **303-692-3485** (regular business hours)

Rabies & Bite Consultation: **303-692-2700** (regular business hours)

303-370-9395 (after-hour, weekend and holiday emergencies)