

Rabies Testing of Animals:

Guidelines for Submitting Specimens for Rabies Testing and Obtaining Test Results

The Rabies Laboratory at the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (SLPH) is the sole source for diagnostic rabies testing in North Carolina. For specific guidelines and instructions on specimen criteria, collection, preparation and shipping; printable forms; access to test results, and other important information see the SLPH web site:

<https://slph.dph.ncdhhs.gov/virology-serology/rabies.asp> .

Small animals must be humanely euthanized and decapitated, and only the head is submitted directly to the SLPH per the guidelines on the SLPH web site. Properly prepared and packaged specimens may be shipped via State Courier Service (preferred) or may be delivered directly to the SLPH in Raleigh; see the SLPH web site for specific instructions and for times of operation.

Large animals: Note that livestock and horse heads and carcasses must *never* be submitted directly to the SLPH. The appropriate protocol is to submit the livestock or horse head or carcass directly to one of the N.C. Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories (NCVDLS) for brain removal (www.ncagr.gov/vet/ncvdl or call 919-733-3986). NCVDLS will remove the brain and submit it to the SLPH for rabies testing. See [Protocol for Submission of Livestock and Equine Specimens for Rabies Testing](#).

Pre-approval is required for submission of Low-Risk Animals (rodents, rabbits, opossums, etc.). Contact the epidemiologist-on-call (919-733-3419) for prior approval and indicate contact name on the rabies examination form submitted with the specimen.

Bats should be euthanized, if not already dead, and submitted whole. The head does not need to be removed. If multiple bats from one address location are submitted, SLPH will contact the epidemiologist-on-call for testing approval and follow-up.

Special pre-approval from the Communicable Disease Branch (919-733-3419) is required for weekend or holiday testing. If approved for weekend testing, a contact phone number for someone who will be available to receive the results during the weekend must be provided. "WEEKEND TESTING" must be written clearly on the outside of the package.

Note: Individuals who package and ship rabies specimens (Category 3) are required to have CLIA training and certification annually and must be certified for Local Health Department Accreditation. (See SLPH [Rabies Packaging and Shipping PowerPoint Presentation](#); [CEUs are available](#)). A helpful handout is available here:

<https://slph.dph.ncdhhs.gov/doc/RabiesPackandShipHandout-NCSLPH-092019.pdf>

Test Results: The laboratory staff will telephone test results for any animal positive for rabies, any unsatisfactory test result, or any test not performed to the appropriate parties at the numbers listed on the completed submission form, as well as to Veterinary Public Health. Negative results will be reported via U.S. Mail or the State Courier System. Authorized and registered users can access rabies [test results online](#) (an account is required). Submitters may register for on-line access to rabies results by calling (919) 733-3937.

Important Phone Numbers

- Laboratory Results: (919) 733-7544 - SLPH Virology/Serology Unit
- For urgent questions after-hours and weekends, contact the epidemiologist-on-call at 919-733-3419.