

## Vermont Department of Health Laboratory

359 South Park Dr, Colchester, VT 05446  
(802) 338-4724 or (800) 660-9997 (VT only)

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PACKAGING AND SHIPPING OF ANIMAL CARCASS OR ANIMAL HEAD SPECIMENS FOR RABIES TESTING VDHL - Kit #10

All specimens submitted to the VDH Laboratory for rabies testing must be **pre-approved** by VDH Epidemiology (1-800-640-4374 in VT, 802-863-7240).

#### Testing Rabies Specimens

- The Vermont Department of Health Laboratory (VDHL) hours are: Monday – Friday, 7:45 am to 4:30 pm, except for state holidays.
- If submission of specimens is necessary after the Lab is closed, please call VDH Epidemiology to make arrangements. (1-800-640-4374 in VT or 802-338-4784).
- Testing may not be possible if the head of the animal has been damaged or is badly decomposed.
- Weekend and Holiday testing will only be performed on specimens with human exposure, and with prior approval by VDH Epidemiology.

#### Rabies Kits (VDHL Kit # 10)

- Rabies kits may be obtained from the Vermont Health Department Laboratory. Call (802) 338-4724 or (800) 660- 9997 (in-state only).
- Rabies kits may also be picked up at many of the State Police barracks and Vermont Department of Health District Offices (please call ahead to inquire).
- This kit is intended for whole animal carcasses or animal heads.
- The kit should contain:
  - 1 thick, black plastic bag in which to place the animal carcass
  - 1 clear plastic bag in which to place the bagged specimen
  - 2 pieces of filament tape for preparing the carton for shipping
  - Six polyfoam panels and plastic bag which line the cardboard shipping container
  - 2 unfrozen 20-ounce ice packs (**Store frozen until needed**)
  - 1 Rabies Request for Examination requisition form (Micro 201)
  - 1 envelope addressed to the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory

#### Preparing the Rabies Specimen

1. Do NOT submit live animals. Specimens should be euthanized. Handle all specimens with disposable gloves.
2. Specimens must be kept refrigerated (not frozen) until shipment.
3. **Domestic pets and small livestock** (sheep, dogs, cats, goats, pigs, etc.) - Decapitate prior to submission to the laboratory. Submit head only. A qualified person should separate the animal head from the body as soon as possible after death. Avoid damage to the brain as it may compromise the test. Use VDHL Kit #12 to submit brain tissue only from large livestock (horses, cows, etc.).
4. **Wildlife animals (raccoon, fox, beaver, etc.)** - May be submitted as a whole carcass as long as it fits into the rabies box. If the animal does not fit into the box, it will need to be decapitated. **Skunks** need to be decapitated or deodorized by submerging the whole animal in a mixture of 1 qt. peroxide, ¼ c. baking soda, and 1 tsp. liquid soap prior to submission.

## **Instructions for Packaging Specimens**

1. Only one rabies specimen should be placed in a box.
2. If two specimens must be placed in the same box:
  - a. Fill out one Rabies Request for Examination form (Micro 201) for **EACH** specimen. Indicate which form is associated with which specimen.
  - b. Under the "Specimen Information" section on the Request for Rabies Examination form (Micro 201), check the box beside the statement "*Check here if more than 1 specimen is in this container. Fill out a separate form for each specimen*".
  - c. Mark in large letters on the outside of the box that there are two specimens in the box.
3. Please do not overstuff the shipping box.
4. The carcass or head of the animal must be placed into the thick, black plastic bag. Twist and tightly knot the top of the bag.
5. Place the black knotted bag inside the clear plastic bag that lines the inside of the insulated cardboard box. Place the two **frozen** ice packs on top of the plastic bag containing the specimen. Twist and tightly knot the top of the clear plastic bag.
6. Place the polyfoam lid on top of the side panels and close the top of the cardboard box completely. Tightly seal the top of the box with tape.
7. Fill out the Rabies Request for Examination form (Micro 201) completely.
8. Place the form in the self-addressed envelope and seal. Attach the envelope to the top of the shipping box. Do NOT place the envelope inside the box. DOT (Department of Transportation) regulations state the "UN3373 Biological Substances, Category B" label located on the envelope must be displayed for all rabies specimens during transport to the VDHL.

## **Shipping Rabies Specimens to the Laboratory**

**Prior arrangements must be made through the VDH Epidemiology Program (800-640-4374 or 802-863-7240)**

- Do not ship rabies specimens by US Mail or UPS.
- Rabies specimens must be delivered to the laboratory by the fastest means possible and may be shipped in one of four ways:
  - Vermont Transit Bus
  - FedEx
  - Fletcher Allen Courier Service (through the local hospital)
  - Specimen delivered by submitter.

If you have any comments or questions regarding these instructions, please call the VDH Laboratory at (802) 338-4724. If you have questions about submission of an animal for rabies testing, please call Epidemiology at 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374 or the Rabies Hotline at 1-800-472-2437.