INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PACKAGING AND SHIPPING OF SMALL ANIMAL (e.g. bat), OR LIVESTOCK BRAIN TISSUE SPECIMENS FOR RABIES TESTING

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

- 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).
- The kit should contain:
  - 1 clear plastic zip lock bag
  - 1 plastic zip lock Biohazard bag
  - 1 insulated cardboard shipping box
  - 1 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.
2. Handle all specimens with disposable gloves.
3. Acceptable specimens depend on the type of animal being submitted:
   - **Bats**: Whole bodies are acceptable.
   - **Small Rodents**: Whole bodies or heads are acceptable.
   - **Livestock (e.g. sheep, goats, cows, horses) Brain Tissue**: Samples of all 3 lobes of the cerebellum and a complete cross-section of the brainstem are required. Removal of brain sections should be performed by a veterinarian. Use the **WHOLE ANIMAL CARCASS OR ANIMAL HEAD KIT** (Micro 408 instructions) to submit ENTIRE livestock heads or other animal heads.
4. Specimens must be kept refrigerated (not frozen) until shipment. **DO NOT FREEZE!** Freezing may damage the brain tissue and may compromise the test and/or delay testing.
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. Place the whole bat, rodent (head or body) or livestock brain tissue into the clear zip lock bag. Ensure the bag is sealed to prevent leaks.

4. Place the clear zip lock bag containing the animal into the Biohazard zip lock bag. Ensure the bag is sealed to prevent leaks.

5. Place the bagged specimen into the insulated cardboard shipping box. Place the frozen ice pack on top of the plastic bag containing the specimen.

6. Place the Styrofoam lid onto the cooler and close the top of the cardboard box completely. 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:
  o Vermont Transit Bus
  o FedEx
  o Fletcher Allen Courier Service (through the local hospital)
  o 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.