NVAP Reference Guide: Laboratory Submissions

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Part of your responsibility as an accredited veterinarian is to ensure that specimen samples sent to a laboratory for testing and certification are properly collected, prepared, identified, packed, and sent along with appropriate submission form(s). Most testing for regulatory work involves drawing and submitting blood samples, but you may also be required to submit other fluid or tissue specimens. When submitting blood or serum samples, it is important to take precautions to provide adequate sample volume for testing and to prevent hemolysis, spoilage, or breaking of the sample tubes.

Diagnostic sample submission procedures are complex and consist of multiple regulatory shipping requirements enforced by multiple entities. Due to the complexity and length of these submission procedures, this guide will explain only what agencies are involved in shipping regulations and then direct you to several sources of information if you have samples to submit to the laboratory. For shipment of samples for regulatory purposes, contact your state animal health official or the VS Area Office.

The following are entities involved in the regulation of the shipment of diagnostic samples:

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

The DOT has regulatory authority over shipments of hazardous materials. Diagnostic specimens fall under this category. DOT regulations were revised in 2003 to harmonize U.S. requirements with international requirements and to enhance the safe transportation of diagnostic specimens. For further information, consult the DOT Web site.

U.S. Postal Service (USPS)

The USPS regulates hazardous material shipments of “diagnostic specimens” sent through the mail. Their regulations are consistent with those of DOT and IATA for shipments of diagnostic specimens. For further information, consult the USPS Web site.

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

IATA is the trade association of the world’s airlines. The IATA tailors its regulations to United Nations technical instructions. All shipments of diagnostic specimens by air must follow IATA regulations, whether sent within the United States or internationally. IATA regulations are consistent with DOT and USPS requirements for shipments of diagnostic specimens. For further information, consult the IATA Web site .

If you need to submit diagnostic specimens in your role as an accredited veterinarian, we request that you follow the guidance below on how and where to get instructions on the sampling, packaging, and shipping of these specimens.

For routine diagnostic samples to be submitted to a State or university diagnostic laboratory

You should contact the laboratory to determine how the sample should be collected, prepared, packaged and shipped. Contact information for many state and university veterinary diagnostic laboratories is available at the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) website.

Most laboratories have websites that guide you to their diagnostic test offerings, submission forms, and user fees.

For routine diagnostic samples to be submitted to NVSL

You should visit the NVSL website to ensure you have the current submission forms and instructions.

You should also visit the NVSL website, which will provide current information on available tests and user fees.

For regulatory diagnostic samples to be submitted to NVSL at Ames, IA or FADDL at Plum Island, NY under the direction of your VS Area Offices

During normal working hours, contact your local VS Area Offices to determine how the sample should be collected and packaged and where the sample should be shipped.

For questions on Foreign Animal Disease Investigation submission after normal working hours

Please contact NVSL directly at (515) 663–7200. This phone number connects you with the night security at NVSL. Ask to speak with the manager on duty to determine how the sample should be collected and packaged and where it should be shipped.

Remember, even when submitting samples directly to a laboratory after hours, always provide the APHIS –VS Area Office with a copy of the submission information. NVSL Laboratory submission forms (VS 10–4 and VS 10–4a), including instructions on completing the forms, on are available electronically.

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