



Our vision:

To excel as a science-based regulator, trusted and respected by Canadians and the international community.

Our mission:

Dedicated to safeguarding food, animals and plants, which enhances the health and well-being of Canada's people, environment and economy.

Key Learning Points

- Criteria for Requesting Weekend or Holiday Testing
- Shipping Limitations
- Availability of Physician/MOH to Receive Result

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RABIES TESTING AT THE CFIA: WEEKEND/HOLIDAY TESTING



HOURS OF OPERATION AND HOLIDAYS

Ottawa Laboratory - Fallowfield
Monday to Friday
8am to 4 pm ET

Diagnostic testing is available on weekends/holidays if certain criteria are met AND if requested in advance.

TO REQUEST TESTING OF **HUMAN** SAMPLES REFER TO DOCUMENT:
Human Specimens v2 2026

Laboratory Closures

- New Years Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- 1st Monday in August
- Labour Day
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Thanksgiving Day
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

AN ANIMAL WILL ONLY BE CONSIDERED FOR RABIES TESTING ON A WEEKEND OR HOLIDAY IF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE SATISFIED:

1. The animal is reasonably suspected of being rabid, based on a thorough investigation including consideration of the animal species involved, its behaviour at the time of the exposure, presentation of clinical signs consistent with rabies, geographical area, and for domestic animals, potential for previous contact with a rabid animal.
2. The person has suffered a WHO Category III exposure (i.e., single or multiple transdermal bites or scratches, licks on broken skin, contamination of mucous membrane with saliva).
3. There is a medical contraindication to receiving post-exposure prophylaxis.
4. The attending physician or Medical Officer of Health provides the laboratory with the name and telephone number of a contact who is readily available to receive and act upon the result on the day of testing. The laboratory must be able to speak with an individual - test results will not be left on an answering machine.

Please note that shipping options are limited outside of normal business hours. It is the responsibility of the submitter to ensure that the sample can be delivered to the laboratory for testing on the weekend or holiday, prior to making a request for testing.



SUBMITTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Refer to "Rabies Testing at CFIA: Packaging of Specimens" for packaging instructions. **DO NOT** freeze the sample as this will delay testing.

**THE RABIES LAB
MUST BE
CONTACTED
PRIOR TO
SHIPMENT TO
ENSURE SERVICE.**

It is the sole responsibility of the submitter to select a method of shipment that will ensure delivery of the sample on the weekend/holiday.

If delays or problems occur after hours, please immediately inform the laboratory by phone or email.

*Note: Leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible. The phone will only be monitored IF the laboratory was notified prior to the end of the last business day, and it was confirmed that the sample would be tested on the weekend/holiday.

Phone: 343-212-0340

Email: cfia.rabieseast-acia.rageest@inspection.gc.ca

METHODS OF SHIPMENT

COURIER

Ottawa has Saturday delivery from some couriers but **NO** Sunday or holiday service available. Check with the courier company for availability. To ensure that the sample arrives on Saturday:

**WEEKEND/
HOLIDAY TESTING
IS ONLY OFFERED
FOR SUSPECT
ANIMALS THAT
HAVE CAUSED A
CATEGORY III
EXPOSURE TO
HUMANS.**

- ⇒ **CHECK OFF "SAT/SAM"** delivery on the electronic waybill.
- ⇒ Change shipping address to **"DEPOT"** and **provide the depot address**
- ⇒ **DO NOT SELECT "DELIVERY BY 9 OR 10 AM"** - this option only applies to Monday to Friday service and will result the specimens being delivered the next business day.
- ⇒ Mark the package **"HOLD FOR PICK-UP"**. The laboratory will arrange for pick-up at the depot.
- ⇒ Record the tracking number; use it to check that the parcel has been picked up at the depot by the CFIA.

BUS

Bus lines **DO NOT** accept Dangerous Goods "Biological Substance, Category B".

AIRFREIGHT

Check with airlines for availability.

MEDICAL LABORATORY TRANSPORT

Check with company for availability.

OUT-OF-HOURS ACCESS FOR SAMPLE DELIVERY

Ottawa Laboratory Fallowfield has a guardhouse that will accept parcels from 6 am to midnight.



EXPOSURE CATEGORIES TO RABIES SUSPECT ANIMAL (DOMESTIC OR WILD)

A wild or domestic animal is considered to be rabies “suspect” when a) there is a case history that includes compatible clinical signs, and b) it is found in a geographic area with either a known epizootic in a rabies reservoir species (i.e., bats, foxes, raccoons or skunks) or a high probability of introduction of rabies based on proximity to known infected areas or importation of the animal from a rabies endemic country.

The CFIA follows the World Health Organization Expert Consultation on Rabies (2nd

Report, 2013) definitions of exposure to determine eligibility for rabies testing. For CFIA purposes, classification of exposure relates both to humans and domestic animals.

Category III exposure is defined as single or multiple transdermal bites or scratches, licks on broken skin, or contamination of mucous membranes with saliva. Animals submitted for testing that have caused a Category III exposure will be tested at no charge.

Category II exposure is defined as nibbling of uncovered skin or minor scratches or abrasions

without bleeding. Animals submitted for testing that have caused a Category II exposure will be tested at no charge, **but will not be tested on weekends/holidays.**

Category I exposure is defined as touching an animal or licks on intact skin, even if the animal is rabid. For humans, it also includes feeding of animals. There is no possibility of exposure to the rabies virus through these types of contact. Animals that have caused a Category I exposure, or no exposure at all, will not be accepted for testing.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR AND CLINICAL SIGNS OF RABIES

Clinical presentation can be quite variable. Prodromal signs are fairly non-specific and can include lethargy, fever, vomiting, and anorexia. These may be followed by some or all of the following: abnormal behaviours, unprovoked aggression, abnormal gait, ataxia, paralysis, seizures, difficulty swallowing, excessive salivation, abnormal vocalizations, and self-mutilation. Infection of the brain with rabies virus leads to behavioural changes in the animal. Examples include nocturnal animals that become active during the day,

wild animals that lose their fear of humans or normally docile pets that show unprovoked aggression. An abnormally acting or biting animal is not necessarily rabid, but if rabies is known to be present in an area it must be given consideration. Many negative interactions with both wild and domestic animals arise from wilful or unintentional provocation. Understanding the “fight or flight” response in animals is important to understanding that an aggressive situation may be due to provocation and not rabies. For example, animals that feel trapped or are cornered will often become

aggressive, injured animals may become aggressive during traumatic situations, and animals that are being hurt may become aggressive, e.g., pulling a cat’s tail. Other reasons might account for the observed behaviour, e.g., a mother animal protecting its young can become aggressive, as can cattle with some metabolic conditions. The complete clinical picture and circumstances surrounding the observed behaviours should be considered during the disease investigation.

RISK OF INFECTION WITH RABIES VIRUS

If the suspect animal displays clinical signs consistent with rabies, then the probability that the animal may have been exposed to rabies virus must be considered. Rabies in bats is endemic in Canada, however, for other species, consideration of the presence of rabies in the local geographic area is warranted.

If the rabies suspect animal

belongs to a known reservoir for rabies virus in a geographic location where rabies is common, then there is a risk that the animal may be rabid.

If the rabies suspect animal is a domestic animal, or a species not known to be a reservoir species or a reservoir species where terrestrial rabies is not common, then the probability of the animal having rabies is significantly reduced.

If it is determined that there is a risk that the rabies suspect animal may be infected with rabies virus, and a Category II or III exposure has occurred, then testing of the specimen may be indicated.

For rabies suspect animals which are domestic species, the vaccination status has no bearing on the determination of the potential presence of rabies virus.



WEEKEND/HOLIDAY TESTING REQUEST

Once it is determined that the specimen qualifies for the service, **FAX or EMAIL** this page to the laboratory.

Fax: 343-212-0202

Email: cfia.rabieseast-rageest.acia@inspection.gc.ca

The request must be received no later than 3 pm on Friday or the day before a Holiday.

THE RABIES SAMPLE SUBMISSION FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY AND A COPY ENCLOSED WITH THE SHIPMENT.

Please provide the following information so that we may cross-reference to the "Rabies Sample Submission" Form:

Animal Species:

Sample ID:

Submitter Name:

It is the responsibility of the submitter to track the shipment. Report any delays or problems to the Rabies Laboratory by phone: 343-212-0340

Courier Company or Airline:

Tracking Number:

Physician/Medical Officer of Health Contact Information

This person **must** be available to receive the call, or respond within the hour, from 12 pm to 8 pm the day the sample is received at the laboratory.

The result will NOT be transmitted to answering services, answering machines, or FAX machines.

Name:

Phone Number:

Alternate Phone Number:

For further information, contact:

R-Unit, Ottawa Laboratory
Fallowfield
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
3851 Fallowfield Road
Ottawa ON K2J 4S1

Mon-Fri 8 am-4 pm ET

Phone: 343-212-0340

Fax: 343-212-0202

E-mail: cfia.rabieseast-rageest.acia@inspection.gc.ca

We're on the Web
inspection.canada.ca