



Rabies Testing – Animal Specimens

Allegheny County Public Health Laboratory

119 Commonwealth Drive, Warrendale, PA 15086 Phone: 412-578-8070

Test Overview

Rabies testing involves the use of Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA) staining. Fluorescent-labeled antibodies bind to rabies virus proteins in the tissue sample, revealing fluorescence in UV light.

Specimen Submission Requirements

Specimen Type	Small animals: Submit the entire animal Large animals (>30 lbs.): Submit only the head (intact brain)
Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must be euthanized before submission• No formalin-fixed tissue• Specimens cannot be submitted if there is significant damage to the brain
Collection Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place the animal or brain tissue in a zip-sealed bag within a labelled, airtight, hard container.• Place the euthanized bat in a labelled biohazard zip-sealed bag within an airtight hard container.
Transportation temperature	Refrigerated (2 – 8°C) or Frozen (-5°C to -80°C)
Container	Use sealed, leak-proof containers that are appropriately sized for the specimen
Submission Address	Warrendale location - 119 Commonwealth Drive, Warrendale, PA, 15086. M–F (8 am to 4 pm)

Allegheny County Public Health Laboratory • Last updated: June 16, 2025

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Requisition Form

The form will be filled out on-site

Testing Information

Methodology: Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA)

Expected Turnaround Time: 4 business days from receipt

Possible Results: No evidence of rabies found / Rabies virus present

Reference Range: No evidence of rabies found

Specimen Rejection Criteria

Live Animals: Animals must not be alive at the time of submission. Living animals will be referred to for euthanasia by a veterinarian or an authorized agency.

Non-compliance with Storage/Transportation Requirements: Specimen must meet specified conditions for proper storage and transportation.

Leaking or Contaminated Transport Containers: Specimen containers must be sealed and free of contamination.

Insufficient Sample Volume: Adequate brain tissue sample volume is required

Degraded or Damaged Specimen: Animals with decomposed, excessively dehydrated, or damaged skull/brain tissue, or those fixed in formalin, will be rejected as they prevent proper analysis.