

User Policies: NJDA Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (AHDL) Services

Policies on Carcass and Specimen/Sample Submissions

1. Necropsy Services:
 - a. Standard necropsy service is offered on most animal species carcasses except non-human primates. Live animals are not accepted for necropsy.
 - b. Carcasses should be submitted for necropsy as soon as possible after death or euthanasia. A carcass should be stored refrigerated for up to 48 hours if it is not presented for necropsy shortly after death. Carcasses may deteriorate significantly beyond 3 days of storage in a refrigerator. The AHDL may refuse carcasses based on advanced decomposition at the discretion of a AHDL pathologist.
 - c. Clients should prearrange large animal submissions (horses, cattle, etc.) by consulting with a AHDL pathologist.
 - d. Forensic and insurance necropsy service is only offered to law enforcement agencies and cases involving insurance claims, respectively. It is the responsibility of the submitting party to contact the laboratory regarding cases involving insurance, forensic, or potential legal aspects to ensure full documentation. Additional charges to the cost of the necropsy may incur anytime during the investigation if it becomes a forensic/insurance case.
2. Submission Forms: Applicable submission form/s may be submitted in advance of carcass and/or specimen/sample submission. The form must be filled out completely. The laboratory will not proceed with necropsy or testing if submission form is not received or filled out completely.
 - a. General submission form: General specimen submission form must accompany carcasses and specimens for testing. At a minimum, the following information is required on the two-page General Submission form: (i) name and contact information (name, address, phone, e-mail) for the submitter, owner, and the party to be billed, (ii) disposition of the carcass after necropsy (laboratory disposal or name of the crematorium), (iii) a summary of the clinical history to include whether the animal died spontaneously or was euthanized with the corresponding date, and (iv) specimen types and test/s requested
 - b. Animal submission acknowledgement form: Submitter must fill out the animal submission acknowledgement form in addition to general submission form for necropsy cases and agree with the content before a necropsy is performed.
 - c. Neurologic form: Neurologic form must be submitted in addition to general submission form for all neurologic livestock/equine cases.
 - d. Federal forms: USDA approved forms must be submitted for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), Brucellosis, and other applicable tests.
3. Necropsy Submission Cut-off Time: Necropsies and laboratory tests are not routinely performed on weekends and state holidays unless there is a public health or foreign animal disease emergency. Therefore, carcasses must be submitted for necropsy by 1 PM on Friday, or by 1PM on Thursday if it is a long weekend with a state holiday on Friday. If a carcass is submitted after 1PM, the carcass will be stored in the refrigerator and necropsy will be performed on the next business day.
4. Referral External Services: The AHDL may utilize external laboratories for ancillary tests and services not available at the AHDL. Costs to AHDL clients will be calculated as the actual laboratory test fee(s) and any shipping and handling.

5. UPS Shipping: The AHDL provides UPS labels for convenient submission of diagnostic specimens/samples such as blood, fluids, swab, serum, urine etc. Use of prepaid UPS labels is subject to terms and conditions of the UPS. Hazardous substances are not allowed by the UPS. The AHDL provided UPS labels may not be used for carcass submissions.
6. Small pocket pets and birds could be submitted through FedEx express overnight pursuant to the submitter's acceptance of terms and conditions of the FedEx at submitter's cost. The AHDL does not provide prepaid FedEx labels. Use of the US Postal Services (USPS) is not recommended due to potential delays in postal system and need to keep specimens as fresh as possible.
7. Animal owners are highly encouraged to submit carcass and specimens through licensed private veterinary practitioners. Regulatory tests (e.g., Equine Infectious Anemia) requiring sample collection and submission by an accredited veterinarian will not be tested if collected and submitted by animal owner or non-accredited veterinarian. When carcasses and specimens are submitted by licensed veterinarians, all case correspondence including reporting and billing is done through submitting veterinarian unless indicated otherwise on submission form or through documented communication.
8. Interpretation or utilization of laboratory results including necropsy reports in the context of animal or herd health to provide services like treatment to cure diseases, vaccinations to prevent diseases, issuance of health certificates and the like are within the practice of veterinary medicine and, therefore, done by licensed veterinarians as provided in the Veterinary Practice Act. Laboratory may not advise owners on services that are within the practice of veterinary medicine by licensed private veterinarians.

Policies on Handling of Animal Remains/Specimens

According to CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>), zoonotic diseases are very common, both in the United States and around the world. Scientists estimate that more than 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in people are spread from animals, and 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people are spread from animals. Every year, tens of thousands of Americans will get sick from harmful germs spread between animals and people. It is out of the scope of the necropsy procedure to test carcass for hundreds of infectious agents that could be transmitted from animals to humans.

AHDL's longstanding practice prohibits, the release of any animal remains directly to owners, veterinarians or submitters, regardless of the type of necropsy service provided by the laboratory. The reason for this policy includes mitigating the risk of disease transmission from animal carcass remains and tissues to either the owner or the owners' other animals or general population. As such, upon submission, animal remains and specimens become the property of AHDL.

Routine laboratory disposal of animal remains is not included in the quoted fee of necropsy services. There is a separate fee for disposal based on the weight of the animal. Please refer to fee schedule for disposal fee. The only exception to the disposal fee is poultry avian necropsy as disposal is included in the test fee. The AHDL does not provide cremation or burial services but may release animal remains to a licensed pet memorial funeral service (crematorium). The animal owner or the animal owner's private veterinarian make the financial arrangements with the private pet memorial service; provide the name of the company and the laboratory will arrange the date of release and pick-up directly with the company. If specific instructions for disposal of animal remains are not provided at the time of submission, the animal remains will be disposed of 30 days after submission at the discretion of the laboratory.

Animals confirmed to be infected with Rabies virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus, West Nile virus or other zoonotic diseases will have remains disposed of as regulated medical waste. This is necessary decontamination procedures for these types of cases and cannot be released to a private pet memorial funeral service.

Billing Policies

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture is permitted by law to charge those fees for animal disease diagnostic and testing services which are necessary for the Department to recover the costs incurred for materials, equipment, test kits, reagents, and some associated personnel expenses for these testing services. Statements are mailed the beginning of each month for the previous month's services. Payment is due from first time clients prior to service. Our payment policy is net 30 days. 1.5% service charge per month may apply after 30 days of invoice date (18% per annum). NJDA reserves the right to take the appropriate legal action to collect any fees not paid within 90 days. Client is responsible for all collection costs, including but not limited to attorney's fees and court costs. Laboratory results may not be released for delinquent accounts. Only checks or money orders are accepted at this time. Checks should be made payable to: NJDA-Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory.

State Regulation Regarding Laboratory Reports

Records Designated Confidential (N.J.A.C. 2:10-1.1): Complete (final) and intermediate (interim) laboratory reports including necropsy reports are not considered government records subject to public access pursuant to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).