

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Animal Health Division

Mailing Address:
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0172
Phone: (304) 558-2214
FAX: (304) 558-2231

Shipping address (courier):
331 Gus R. Douglass Lane
Charleston, WV 25312
Phone: (304) 558-2214
FAX: (304) 558-2231

A GUIDE FOR SHIPPING DIAGNOSTIC SPECIMENS

A diagnostic specimen is “any human or animal material, including excreta, secreta, blood and its components, tissue fluids being transported for diagnostic or investigational purposes, but excluding live infected animals.”

Federal regulations govern the packaging and labeling of diagnostic specimens. If spillage that damages mail or equipment occurs during the shipment, the shipper may face prosecution, even if the material involved was not hazardous.

PACKAGING REQUIRED FOR SHIPMENT OF DIAGNOSTIC SPECIMENS:

These instructions are a guide when shipping a diagnostic specimen which does **NOT** contain a known infectious substance which is likely to cause disease in humans or animals (routine diagnostic samples).

Note: Specimens from suspected cases of **foreign animal diseases** (FADs), reportable diseases, and other highly infectious and virulent diseases do not fall within these guidelines. Contact your State Veterinarian or the Federal Veterinarian-in-charge if an FAD is suspected.

Current U.S. Postal Service and IATA regulations state that diagnostic specimens must be packaged in triple packaging consisting of:

1. **A primary receptacle:** Primary receptacles must be packaged in such a way that under normal conditions of transport, they cannot break, be punctured, or leak their contents into the secondary packaging. **Example: blood tube**
2. **Leak-proof secondary packaging:**
 - a. Secondary packaging(s) is leak-proof; **Example: Ziploc bag**

- b. Absorbent material in sufficient quantity to absorb the entire contents must be placed between the primary and secondary packaging.
- c. If multiple fragile primary receptacles are placed in a single secondary packaging, they must be either individually wrapped or separated so as to prevent contact between them.
- d. The secondary container **cannot** serve as the outer shipping container.
- e. The secondary container must be marked with the international biohazard symbol. (U.S. Postal only)

3. Outer packaging:

- a. The outer shipping container must be rigid. **Example: cardboard box**
- b. Outer packing must be clearly and durably marked with the words “**Exempt Animal Specimen**”.
- c. At least one surface of the outer packaging must have a minimum dimension of 3.9 inches by 3.9 inches (100 mm by 100 mm).

For more information on USPS packaging guidelines please see:

http://pe.usps.com/text/pub52/pub52apxc_030.htm

IATA (courier) guidelines may be found at:

[http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/dgr/Documents/DGR52_InfectiousSubstances\(DGR362\).pdf](http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/dgr/Documents/DGR52_InfectiousSubstances(DGR362).pdf)

To ensure that the laboratory receives a quality sample and that there is no confusion upon delivery, please follow the suggestions below.

- Please send all required paperwork with samples. (i.e. Coggins forms or specimen submission forms)
- Label each specimen with the animal’s identification and a tube number that correlates with the paperwork.
- Do not wrap forms around samples: if the sample leaks, the form will be damaged.
- Do not send samples in syringes and remove all sharps from the boxes. Packages with sharps will be rejected.
- Do not put samples that should be chilled in direct contact with the ice packs as it could damage the specimen.
- Provide a return address.

If you have any questions concerning packaging and/or shipping, please contact the WVDA Animal Health Laboratory at 304-558-2214.