

DSHS Rabies Specimen Submission Tutorial

(Updated Feb. 2026)

Submitting Rabies Specimens to DSHS Laboratory

The Laboratory accepts **only animal heads**, except for **very small mammals** such as bats, rats, and mice. Due to biohazard safety guidelines the laboratory cannot return carcasses to submitters or owners. Whole bats are preferred, as it allows the Lab to speciate them. **Live specimens are not accepted.**

REMEMBER TO NOTIFY THE RABIES LAB OF YOUR SUBMISSION!

1. Keep Specimen Chilled

If you are submitting an animal head, have a qualified person separate the head from the body immediately after death. Avoid damage to the brain, as it may compromise the test.

Immediately chill the specimen to between 36°F and 46° F (2°C – 8°C). Do not freeze the specimen. Freezing will delay test results and may damage the brain tissue.



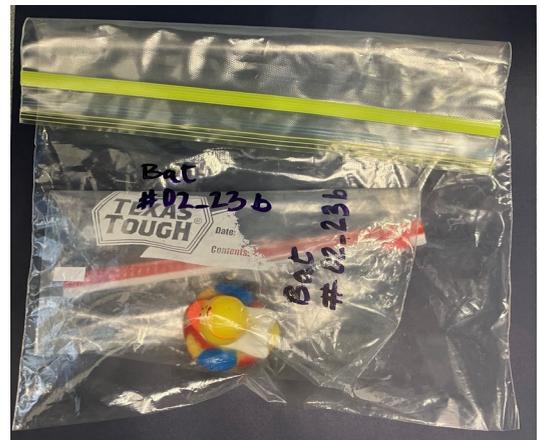
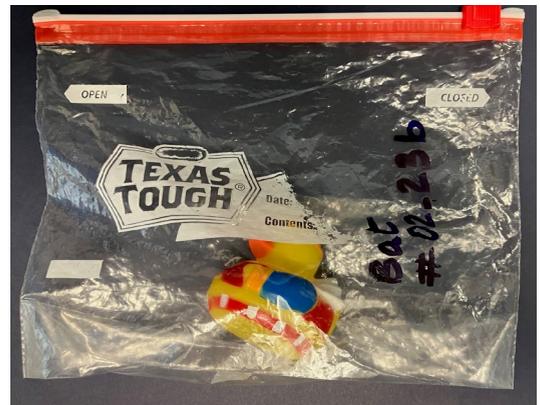
Specimen* should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Do not freeze!

**Photos do not depict a real animal specimen.*

2. Package Specimens

Place each specimen in a sealable, leakproof storage bag. Put each sealed specimen bag inside a second, larger sealable bag. Double bag larger animal heads in two appropriately sized plastic bags that can be securely sealed to prevent leaks.

Attach an **identification number** or name to the outside of each double-sealed plastic bag. This is **especially important** if more than one specimen is sent in a submission package.



3. Complete G-9 Rabies Specimen Submission Form(s)

Provide the required information on a **separate G-9 Rabies Submission Form for every specimen**. Place the completed form(s) in a sealable plastic bag to keep them dry.

The specimen identification information on the submission form(s) **must exactly match** the identification information on the specimen(s).

The G-9 Form is available for download on the Lab's [Forms webpage](#). You may request a G-9 form by calling 1-888-963-7111 or emailing labinfo@dshs.texas.gov.

Place G-9 form in a leakproof bag.

4. Prepare Mailing Container

Obtain an insulated container strong enough to withstand shipment, such as a polystyrene cooler box inside a cardboard box.

Line the bottom and sides of the cooler box with absorbent packing material such as butcher paper or newspaper to cushion the specimen.

Packing peanuts are not recommended as they are not absorbent.

Use gel packs or similar refrigerants rather than ice to keep specimens cold. Avoid using ice as it is a common cause of leaks.



5. Add and Secure Specimen

Place the specimen(s) into the cooler box. Surround the specimens with refrigerant. Use enough refrigerant to ensure the specimen(s) remain chilled for at least 48 hours, especially during hot Texas summers.

Do not use dry ice!



5. Add and Secure Specimen, cont.

Place additional absorbent packing material on top of specimen. Add enough packaging to prevent the specimens from moving in transit. Filling the remaining gaps in the container also helps to better insulate the specimen.



Secure the cooler lid in place.



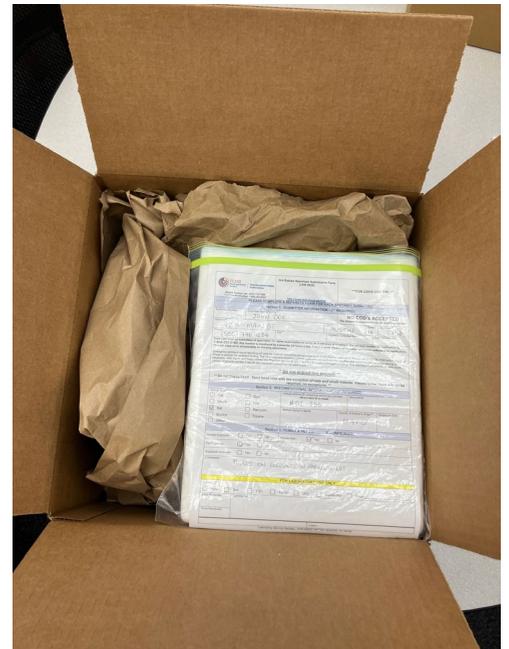
5. Prepare Outer Container

Place the submission form(s) in the outer container.

Please do not put the submission form in the cooler with the specimen! It could get wet and become unreadable.

Place the cooler box in a sturdy box (outer container). Fill any gaps with packing material to secure the cooler box in place to prevent movement.

Seal the outer container.



6. Label Outer Container and Write Shipping Address Clearly

Label the outside of the shipping container as shown in the image and explained below:

Attn: Rabies Identification Team

Salvador Arreola

Texas Department of State

Health Services,

Public Health Laboratory Division,

1100 W. 49th St.

Austin, Texas 78756

512-776-7595

REFRIGERATE ON ARRIVAL

Biological Substance, Category B

IMPORTANT: If shipping specimen via USPS, add the code "MC 1947" to the Lab's address.

Provide the **submitter's name and address** as the return address.

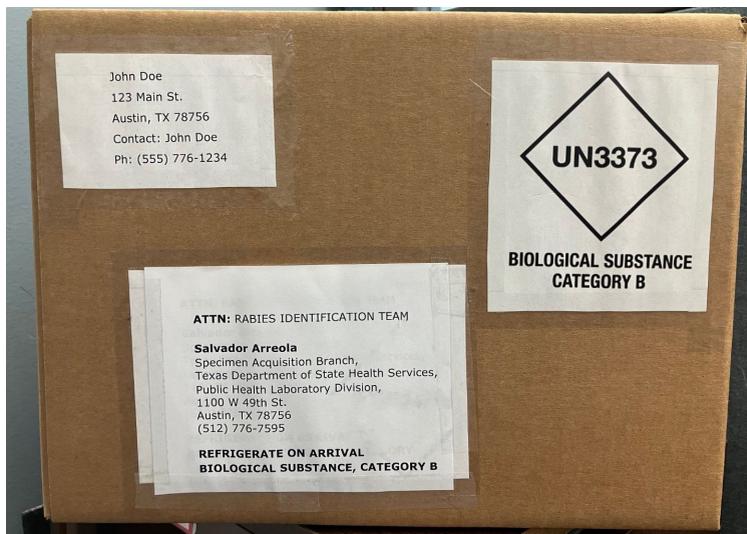
Write the **submitter's contact phone number** under the return address.

Affix a UN3373 label to the outer container, near the address.

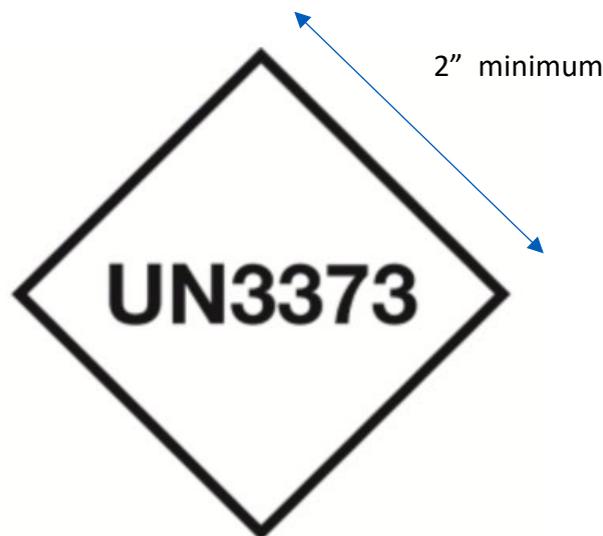
If needed, you may size up and print the UN3373 label shown at right.

OR

Draw the UN3373 diamond on the outer container with a black pen or marker.



Outer container should be labeled as shown.



**BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE
CATEGORY B**

Each side of the UN3373 diamond should be a minimum 2 in (5.1 cm) in length.

7. Notify Lab of Specimen Submission

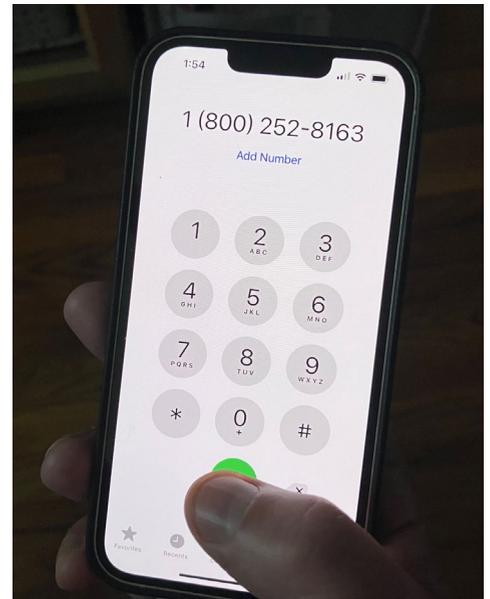
Notification is Required by Texas State Law.

Call the 24-hour, Toll-Free Rabies Hotline at **1-800-252-8163**. Leave a message with the specimen's details and its expected arrival time.

OR

Submit an online rabies specimen notification form by visiting the Rabies Lab's webpage.

Notification is critical for laboratory staff to monitor specimen arrivals and to notify submitters if they do not arrive as expected.

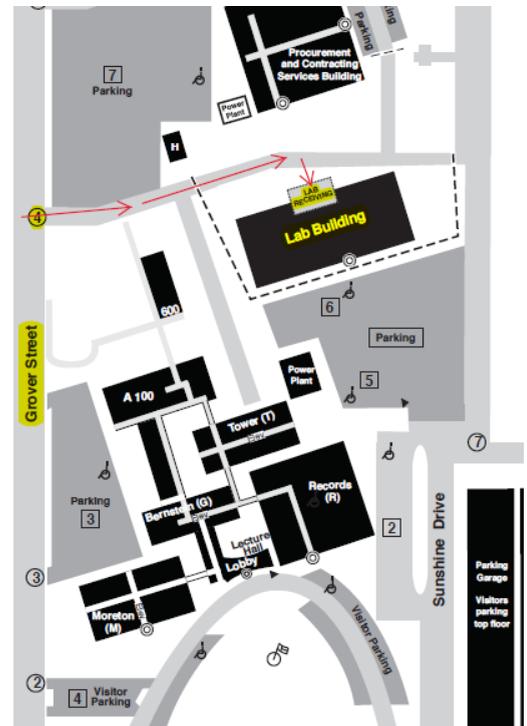


***Toll-Free Rabies Hotline Number:
1-800-252-8163***

8. Specimen Delivery to Lab

Specimens are accepted at the Lab's specimen receiving dock during regular business hours, Monday–Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Deliveries after business hours, on weekends, or on holidays are discouraged. We do not routinely accept deliveries outside of business hours.

Instead, we recommend specimens be chilled between 36°F–46°F (2°C–8°C) over the weekend or holiday and be shipped for delivery the next regular workday.



Specimens may be delivered to the Lab's Receiving Dock from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Emergency Testing of Specimens

For emergency testing on a Saturday, **you must receive approval** from the Laboratory **prior to submission**.

Before 4:00 p.m. Friday, call the Rabies Laboratory at (512) 776-7595.

After 4:00 p.m. Friday, call (512) 776-7111 and request to speak with a regional Zoonosis Control (ZC) staff member. The ZC staff member will contact the Rabies Lab to arrange testing.

The specimen **must arrive at the Lab by 8:00 a.m.**

Some couriers offer an 8:00 a.m. delivery service for an additional charge but often miss the 8:00 a.m. deadline. The only reliable way to get a Saturday submission to the lab by 8:00 a.m. is to hand deliver it.

Remember

- Keep the specimen chilled between 36°F and 46° F (2°C and 8°C).
- **Do not freeze.**
- Submit a completed **G-9 Rabies Submission Form** for each specimen.
- Pack the specimen(s) in a **double container**. Line the inner container with newspaper, or other absorbent packing material.
- Use gel packs or similar refrigerants for shipping. **Do not use dry ice.** Use of wet ice is not recommended. If ice is the only coolant available, make sure it is in a **sturdy, leakproof** container.
- Call the toll-free **Rabies Hotline** at 1- 800-252-8163 with details about the specimen and its expected arrival time.

OR

Notify the lab of you specimen submission by completing the [submission notification form](#) on the Rabies Lab's webpage.

Questions About Transporting or Submitting Specimens to the Laboratory?

- Call the Rabies Lab 512-776-7598 or email rabies.team@dshs.texas.gov.
- The **Specimen Receiving Dock** is on the north side of the laboratory building and is accessible from Grover Street. A map of the DSHS Austin campus showing the dock is available on the Rabies Lab's webpage.



A DSHS campus map and address are available online at [Contact Us | Texas DSHS](#).