

GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF SAMPLES FOR TSE CONFIRMATORY TESTING

The Veterinary Laboratories Agency will be happy to perform a confirmatory examination on your TSE suspect material. Please note and follow the submission instructions below.

SAMPLING

It is frequently possible to confirm a positive case of TSE using sub-optimal tissue. However, to be able to state conclusively that a case is *TSE negative* requires more stringent tissue collection and handling. For immunohistochemistry, for example, there must be good representation and preservation of the appropriate target areas, otherwise the only possible diagnostic outcomes are 'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'.

Therefore, **if sub-optimal tissue is submitted, only limited diagnosis may be possible.**

Fresh material for confirmatory Western blot or SAF testing

Fresh, frozen caudal medulla is the optimal tissue requirement for either of these two tests. A minimum quantity of 5g is required for OIE long protocol Western blot testing and 1g for SAF testing.

The material should be placed in sealed, clearly labelled containers. The containers should then be packaged with sufficient dry ice to remain frozen for the duration of the transit time, and in accordance with the IATA instructions (as below).

Fixed or paraffin-embedded material for immunohistochemistry

For histopathology and/or immunohistochemistry, fixed brain tissue (optimally the brainstem at the level of the obex) should be submitted, either as 'wet' tissue, or a paraffin-embedded block. Detail should be given of the fixative used and any post-fixation treatment of the tissue.

Unstained sections

These can be sent if it is not possible to submit fixed or embedded material. However, we frequently encounter difficulties with this type of submission if the bonding agent on the slides is not compatible with our staining protocols, and the likelihood of wash-offs is greatly increased.

PACKAGING AND LABELLING OF PARCELS

All material must be packaged to IATA standards. It is recommended that you contact your nearest IATA office which will be able to give you the relevant local information with regard to pathogens, fixatives and dry ice.

The parcel should be clearly addressed to:

Neuropathology Section (FAO S Courtney)
Building 96
Veterinary Laboratories Agency
Woodham Lane
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 3NB
UK

It is requested that packages are sent to arrive on a working day (i.e. Monday to Friday), and not at a weekend.

Please note: All parcels should be dispatched in a way that ensures delivery to VLA, not just to the UK port of entry. If this is not done, samples will be delayed through Customs clearance, and the sender will be invoiced for the costs incurred by this, and subsequent transport of samples to VLA.

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION

All samples must be accompanied by copies of relevant, current Import and Export Licenses. Please contact the Neuropathology Section (FAX ++00 (0)1932 357805) for details.

A letter with the individual animal and sample details and reference numbers, together with any relevant background information, should be included in the packaging. This letter should also include an indication of the test requested. **A copy of the letter should be sent** under separate cover to the same address (see above), or FAXed to **++ 44 (0)1932 357805 for the attention of S.A.Courtney**. This will alert the laboratory to the imminent arrival of the package.

COSTS AND CHARGING

For single/small numbers of cases the VLA currently makes no charge (this service is presently covered by our role as an EU and OIE reference laboratory). However, if larger numbers of routine confirmatory tests are required over a period of time, this would be undertaken on a contractual basis, and a charge made.

Under some circumstances transportation charges may be incurred (see above). These will be charged to the submitting laboratory.

QUERIES AND CONTACTS

If you require any further clarification of these procedures and options please contact Sonya Courtney or Marion Simmons (s.courtney@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk; m.m.simmons@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk; or FAX ++ 44 (0)1932 357805)