

Guidelines for sending serum samples to the L3 laboratories

The guidelines provided by Queensland Health Scientific Services show what would normally be required when sending samples to an L3 laboratory.

Guidelines for Sending Serum Samples to Queensland Health Scientific Services

For all samples:

Minimum info:

Name & Date of birth or Name & referring lab identifying number

Preferred information: (in addition to above)

Sex, Date of onset, date of collection, recent vaccination, recent overseas travel history

Dengue (& other arboviruses including JE, RRV, BFV & CHIK)

PCR – viral detection & genotyping

IgM & IgG

Serological confirmation & Typing

Serum 0.5 mL minimum volume

Frozen for PCR

+4C or frozen for serology

Note: it is not possible to serologically confirm dengue based on a single IgM positive sample – it is important to submit paired acute and convalescent serum samples to demonstrate a rising or falling antibody titre. In the absence of paired serum, reports from this lab will indicate a probable dengue infection only.

Measles

PCR- viral RNA detection

Genotyping (to distinguish vaccine from wild type)

Urine (5 mL) / throat swab / nasopharyngeal aspirate (NPA)

+4C

Influenza (including avian influenza)

PCR – viral RNA detection and genotyping

NPA or throat swab

+4C

Rubella

PCR – viral RNA detection

NPA (urine, cord blood from new born)

Frozen /+4C

Leptospirosis

PCR – Bacterial DNA detection

MAT – Serological detection and serotyping

Serum 0.2 mL minimum volume

Frozen or +4 (frozen preferred)

Note this testing is performed by Lee Smythe of the WHO/FOI Leptospirosis Collaborating Centre which is located in an adjoining laboratory.

We can also perform testing for SARS & rabies/Australian Bat Lyssavirus, Hendra/Nipah & a variety of exotic viral diseases where such requests are medically warranted and requested by senior medical officers within the departments of Health of PICs.

Temporary layout

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We are prepared to test several hundred specimens without charge to help public health officials confirm or control a community outbreak – providing the testing requested is scientifically / medically justified and consistent with prevailing WHO guidelines.

Editor's note: For outbreak confirmation, there is no need to send samples from more than 10-20 patients with the suspected disease (if needed, this can be repeated in geographically different entities, e.g. Islands). After that, additional samples can be sent by batches for monitoring purposes, from a proportion of the cases (e.g one out of 10 or 20, randomly or systematically selected).

Guidelines for Sending Serum Samples to Queensland Health Scientific Services (Arboviruses & Leptospirosis)

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) have indicated that they intend on strictly enforcing the regulations regarding the transport of all material (including diagnostic specimens) into Australia. Unless all of the documentation has been completed correctly and the samples packaged according to IATA guidelines they will refuse to release the material.

These requirements are in addition to what the Airline may require. You will need to fulfil all of the requirements of the airline as well as those listed below.

- All documentation must be signed (it is not sufficient to type your name)
- A list of the contents (called a Suppliers Declaration) AND a copy of a current import permit must be affixed to the outside of the container – (it's a good ideal to include a copy on the inside as well). The documents attached on the outside of the package should be in an envelope with the label; **“Attention Quarantine”**
- The Suppliers Declaration to be included in the envelope must clearly state the number of vials, the approximate volume and the contents of each eg.;

Suppliers Declaration

To: G. Smith (or L. Smythe for Lepto)
Queensland Health Scientific Services
39 Kessels Road,
Coopers Plains, QLD Australia. 4108
Ph: 617 327 49151 (or 617 3274 9064 for Lee Smythe)

AQIS Permit number 200311351

(this permit number is only good until 23 Jun 2005)

The package contains a total of seven vials consisting of:

- 4x Vials each containing 0.5 mL of human serum for diagnostic purposes
- 3x Vials each containing 1.0 mL of human serum for diagnostic purposes

Tests requested; dengue exclusion (or lepto or other arbovirus)

Signature

Joe Bloggs
Scientist-in-charge
A Pacific Island Country Health Facility
Phone number
Fax Number

It is important that you state that the samples are 1) human serum and 2) for diagnostic purposes.

Before you send a package it is advisable that you notify the laboratory (either the virology laboratory or the WHO Leptospirosis Lab) by either email, fax or telephone so that we can alert our Custom agents that we are expecting a package. It is important that we know the airway bill number, the flight information and as much detail as you can provide about the number of samples, their volumes, what tests are requested (lepto, dengue or other arbovirus) and where the results should be forwarded.

While it is an onerous and expensive task to package up specimens and send them to Australia – I can assure you that it is as equally as time consuming and expensive to get the samples cleared through Quarantine once they arrive in Australia.

It would be a tragedy if irreplaceable diagnostic samples were destroyed by AQIS because of a lack of signature or documentation. By following these guidelines you may also avoid the samples being delayed several days while we 'jump through the regulatory hoops.'

Contact Person

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