

September 15, 2017

**Subject: Changes in the Rabies Testing at the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Laboratories (PA BOL)**

Dear Rabies Client,

Due to budgetary restrictions, the PA BOL will be making the following changes to its rabies testing program:

- Effective October 1, 2017, the PA BOL will discontinue routine Saturday and holiday testing of suspect rabies samples. **Rabies testing will be performed only Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays.** Samples that arrive after 10:00AM on Fridays will be refrigerated and processed the next business day. **BOL will test samples on weekends/holidays only on a case-by-case basis and prioritized for medical and public health emergencies;**
- Effective October 1, 2017, the PA BOL will no longer provide routine pickup and delivery courier services for suspect rabies samples. **Courier services will only be available on a case-by-case basis and prioritized for medical and public health emergencies.**

Full details of the rabies testing, sample requirements and guidelines for packing and shipping can be found on the PA BOL website ([www.health.pa.gov/labs](http://www.health.pa.gov/labs)).

The submitter **must** obtain approval for:

- emergency testing on weekends/holidays;
- emergency courier service.

The approval is obtained by consultation with the submitter's local health authority, e.g., Department of Health State Health Center (SHC) or District Office (DO), county or municipal health department, or a public health physician with the Department of Health Bureau of Epidemiology (717-787-3350). **The agency granting approval must contact the PA BOL.**

The turnaround time for rabies testing is 24-72 hours once the sample is received in-house. Positive results will be phoned to the county SHC/DO (including county/municipal health departments where appropriate) and the submitter. ALL results will be faxed.

**Please do not call the rabies laboratory for results if within 72 hour timeframe mentioned above. The staff is extremely busy, especially during the summer months, with processing and testing. Diversions to answer the phone will delay an hours' long complex testing and reading process.**

Should you have any questions, please contact Lisa Dettinger, Director Division of Clinical Microbiology at [ldettinger@pa.gov](mailto:ldettinger@pa.gov) or 484-870-6416.