

SAMPLE LABELLING AND SPECIMEN STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

Samples submitted to external pathology laboratories must be carefully labelled and stored according to the guidelines below:

SAMPLE LABELLING REQUIREMENTS

Samples in specimen containers/tubes

- Each specimen container/tube must be labelled with the animal's name or other unique identification (e.g. patient ID number).
 - For herd/survey testing, each specimen container must be individually labelled, but need not identify an individual animal.
 - Where confusion with another specimen from the same animal may be possible, the container/tube must also be labelled with the type of specimen (e.g. if a blood sample and also a body cavity fluid sample is submitted from the same animal in the same container type, the containers should be clearly labelled as such).
- It is recommended that the date of collection be recorded on the specimen container/tube.

Glass slides (cytology and blood films)

- The animal identification must be on the slide itself.
 - Attaching a label to the slide mailer/casing without labelling the slide is not acceptable.
 - Glass slides with frosted ends are preferable. The details should be written in pencil on the frosted end. For slides without frosted ends, write the details on the end of the slide with permanent marker. A diamond-tip pen may also be used to engrave the details on the glass.
- If cytology samples are collected from multiple sites, the site must also be written on each glass slide.

Note

Where inadequately labelled specimens are received, laboratory staff may still process the sample if the identity of the specimen is assured; however a comment will be applied to reports indicating that the sample was inadequately labelled.

If the identity of the specimen is not assured, the sample may not be processed and recollection may be required.

GENERAL SPECIMEN STORAGE AND TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

- For sample storage and special transport requirements for specific tests, refer to appropriate ASAP test protocols or contact the laboratory.
- Specimens should be in tightly sealed, leak proof containers and transported in sealable, leak-proof plastic specimen bags.

Routine blood tests

- Samples with anticoagulant (EDTA, lithium heparin, sodium citrate, fluoride oxalate/heparin) must be mixed well immediately following collection.
- Samples should be sent to the laboratory as soon as possible after collection.
- If there is a delay between sample collection and submission to the laboratory, samples should be refrigerated. Allow whole blood samples in plain (red top) or gel (gold top) tubes to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes prior to refrigeration to allow the clotting process to occur.
- If samples will be delayed by more than 12 hours, centrifuge the plain (red top) and gel (gold top) tubes after allowing them to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. Remove the serum, and place in a plain tube. Clearly label this tube with the patient name and 'serum'.

Urine samples

- Urine analysis should be performed as soon as possible after collection as changes in composition may occur over time (e.g. changes in pH, proliferation of bacteria, dissolution/precipitation of crystals etc).
- Refrigerate the sample if it is not being analysed immediately.
- Allow the sample to return to room temperature before performing analysis.

Microbiological samples

- Swabs in Amies transport media for culture and sensitivity testing should be stored and transported at room temperature (not refrigerated).
- Urine samples (see general rules for urine samples above).
- Faecal samples should be refrigerated if transport to the laboratory will be delayed.

Glass slide samples (cytology and blood films)

- Specimens on glass slides (cytology and blood films) should be stored at room temperature. Refrigeration may result in condensation on the slide which can damage cells.
- Formalin should never be added to non-histopathology specimens.
- Glass slide samples must not be stored with formalin containers.
When submitting glass slide samples and formalin-fixed samples to the laboratory, these specimens must be submitted in separate zip-lock bags. Formalin and formalin fumes fix the cell membranes, reducing the ability of cytological stains to penetrate. This may result in a non-diagnostic sample.

Additional Information

- Guidelines for order of draw of blood samples are available.
- For guidelines on containers/tubes required for specific testing, volume of sample required, and special collection requirements, please refer to the ASAP test and services directory, ASAP test protocols, or contact the laboratory.