



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Guidance for veterinary practitioners for the submission of samples from dogs and cats if bovine TB is suspected.

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APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

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Background

Current animal health legislation requires that veterinarians who examine the carcass of a pet mammal suspected of being affected with tuberculosis must notify APHA without delay. The suspicion of TB in a living pet is not currently notifiable.

In England, in most cases specimens (i.e. biopsy tissues) from these animals can be submitted privately for culture to APHA at full cost recovery, or to another laboratory such as a public health laboratory.

TB culture of samples submitted to APHA is currently available free of charge to the submitting private vet/pet owner if:

- the pet cat or dog is kept on a farm with susceptible livestock in England
- the pet cat or dog is kept in Scotland or Wales and it is agreed that there is a reasonable suspicion of TB infection.

Or if:

- the pet is kept in England and meets more detailed 'triage' criteria (please contact APHA Duty Vet to discuss).

In Scotland, private vets may submit suspect TB carcasses or samples from pet animals to private laboratories (including to SRUC) who will undertake post mortem examinations, histopathology and sampling at the owners'/vets' expense. If the private (primary) laboratory suspects *M. bovis*, they will continue to submit their isolates to APHA at Weybridge for identification/confirmation at government expense.

In Wales, where clinical signs of TB are suspected in the live animal, private vets can request a post-mortem, or send tissue samples, to an APHA Laboratory, or to the Wales Veterinary Science Centre, Aberystwyth. All costs will be paid for by the Welsh Government. If samples have been sent to a private laboratory and the private laboratory suspects TB, it can send samples for culture to APHA Weybridge for disease confirmation. In this instance, the Welsh Government will pay only for the costs of culture.

For other cases in dogs and cats, where for consequential reasons TB may be a possible cause of death, an APHA Laboratory or the Wales Veterinary Science Centre, Aberystwyth, will still carry out a post-mortem, or examine tissues, under appropriately safe laboratory conditions and complete further laboratory analysis. However, Welsh Government will pay only for the costs of culture, not the post-mortem, for which you will be charged in most cases.

Practitioners should discuss with the Duty Vet at the local APHA Field Services office prior to submitting samples to APHA laboratories. The duty vet will advise whether the case is eligible for testing free of charge. See [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) to find the location of your local APHA Field Services office and contact details.

If the carcass/samples are eligible for government-funded testing, the duty vet will give you a TB50 form to accompany the samples. Please use form BA.704, available on [Vet Gateway](#) for chargeable submissions to APHA.

Submission of samples for chargeable mycobacterial culture

Submit samples of fresh tissue (up to 20g) to APHA Weybridge for culture. Do not put the tissue into any transport medium. If the tissue has been frozen please mark the submission form accordingly.

The sample must be dispatched in a leak-proof pot or bag and then double-contained in a larger leak-proof pot or bio-jar, then inside an outer cardboard box to satisfy UN 3373.

The sample must be accompanied by a fully completed submission form BA.704 (Annex 1) with the name of your nearest local APHA Field Services office, the postcode of the owner and your contact email address. Failure to provide a contact e-mail address will result in a £10.00 fee for a hard copy of each report to be sent via Royal Mail.

The box must be labelled clearly:

APHA Weybridge
TB Diagnosis Section
Laboratory Services
Woodham Lane
New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 3NB

If the animal has died or been euthanased and you wish a post mortem examination (PME) to be carried out for TB diagnosis, please contact your nearest APHA Field Services office (see link above for contact details) in the first instance to discuss arrangements for PME. They will advise on whether the examination will be chargeable or free of charge, and on the nearest suitable PME site.