Anthrax, Plague, and Tularemia Submission Guidelines

Please follow instructions closely. Call the NDSU-VDL prior to shipping or dropping off your specimen at (701) 231-7527 or (701) 231-8307. Failure to notify the laboratory prior to submitting the specimen may result in a delay in test results.

- The NDSU-VDL tests for three Select Agents: Bacillus anthracis “Anthrax”, Francisella tularensis “Tularemia”, and Yersinia pestis “Plague.” Select Agents are defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as “Biological agents and toxins that have been determined to have the potential to pose a severe threat to public health and safety, to animal and plant health, or to animal and plant products.” and should therefore be handled with due caution.

- The new VDL houses a Biosafety Level 3 laboratory, which helps to ensure containment of such agents after arrival at the lab, but safe sample handling starts at collection. Special handling, packaging, and prior notification are required when submitting a sample suspected of containing a Select Agent. The agent may be present in lesions/bubos exudates and blood, tissues from infected animals, fluids from infected animals, and fluids from infected arthropods. Direct contact of skin or mucous membranes with infectious materials, accidental parenteral inoculation, ingestion, and exposure to aerosols and infectious droplets can result in infection. It is critically important to wear gloves and other appropriate personal protective equipment when handling animals and collecting samples suspected of containing one of these agents. Send samples that are not leaking, are properly labeled, and are contained in an appropriate specimen container. See test pages (linked above) for preferred sample types and information regarding appropriate containers. For the safety of laboratory staff, NEVER send needles with the sample.

Packaging and Shipping guidelines

REMINDER: Call the laboratory prior to shipping or dropping off the sample!

- Line the bottom of the Styrofoam shipping container with paper towels or other absorbent material. Place the sealed bag with the specimen in a Styrofoam shipping container with a frozen icepack.

- Write which Select agent is suspected clearly on the outside of the Styrofoam container eg. SUSPECT ANTHRAX, SUSPECT TULAREMIA, SUSPECT PLAGUE. Do not write this on the outer box.

- Fill out General Submission Form. Be specific, include case history and clearly indicate the sample is a suspect Select Agent. Place the submission form in a sealable bag; place bag on the outside of the Styrofoam shipping container.

- Place the Styrofoam container inside a rigid outer cardboard box. Seal outer box with packaging tape. Attach a Biological Substance Category B, UN3373 label on the outside of the box and affix shipping label/address/sender info. Next day delivery is recommended.

- If dropping off the sample in person, transport the sample in a leak-proof container within a box or sealable bag.

Note: Do not place any other samples in the box. If the sample is positive, all other samples in the same container will be destroyed.