Guidance on sending in samples

January 2019

What to avoid when sending samples

- Using excessive sellotape on outer packaging
- Sending haemolysed blood
- Using gloves or any other non-leak proof containers
- Writing multiple sample numbers on a single sample container
- Placing samples in non-sequential order in boxes containing multiple samples
- Using a container if sample content has seeped onto its exterior

Mailing guidelines

Royal Mail should accept all samples for routine diagnostic testing. Royal Mail do not accept Category A infectious material, but this should not affect routine veterinary samples. General guideline from the HSE is that samples (blood, tissue, excreta, secreta etc.) from humans or animals are considered to be Category B infectious substances. These samples are then assigned to UN3373 and must be packaged according to IATA PI:650 for transport. There is an added complication that for Category B samples each individual package must hold a total of less than 50ml of liquid or 50g of tissue.

Samples which are taken for serology testing from a healthy animal are exempt from UN3373. Specimens for which there is minimal likelihood that pathogens are present are not subject to the regulations (meaning volumes over 50ml/50g can be sent) if the specimen is packed in a packaging which will prevent any leakage and which is marked with the words “Exempt human specimen” or “Exempt animal specimen” as appropriate.