

Guidance on Sending Diagnostic Samples to Biobest

Over the past few months some of our customers have experienced problems when trying to send routine diagnostic samples to us using Royal Mail. Royal mail should accept all samples for routine diagnostic testing as long as the packages comply with the relevant legislation. They do not accept 'Category A' infectious material but as this only applies to samples known to contain dangerous human or animal pathogens this should not affect samples being sent to us. It is important for us to emphasise that it is the responsibility of the shipper to ensure that samples are sent in accordance with the relevant legislation and as such we would request that customers contact us if they have any questions regarding shipment of samples.

The general guideline from the HSE is that all samples (blood, tissue, excreta, secreta etc) from humans or animals are considered, as a minimum, Category B infectious substances. These samples are then assigned to UN3373 and must be packaged according to IATA PI:650 for transport. The Royal Mail will transport Category B infectious material but only if it is packaged correctly.

Samples which are taken for serology testing from a healthy animal may be exempt from UN3373 under IATA 3.6.2.2.3.6. This states that "patient specimens for which there is minimal likelihood that pathogens are present are not subject to the Regulations 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." In this case the appropriate packaging must meet the following conditions:

The packaging must consist of 3 components, a

leak proof primary receptacle (blood tube / universal container), a leak proof secondary packaging (sealed plastic bag) and an outer packaging of adequate strength for its capacity, mass and intended use (cardboard box). There must also be sufficient absorbant material included in the package to absorb all the sample volume (blue roll, foam, cotton wool etc).

The packaging requirements for Category B material (PI:650) is similar and a copy of the exact requirements can be found on our website.



A degree of professional judgement is therefore required in order to determine whether samples are non-hazardous or Category B infectious materials. There is an added complication that for Category B samples each individual package must hold a total

of less than 50ml of liquid.

We would argue that the majority of our samples are non-hazardous but it is up to the practitioner to use their judgement before deciding how to ship samples.

In order to avoid any difficulties the outer packaging should be clearly marked with either:

'UN3373 Category B Infectious Material'
or
'Exempt animal specimen - non hazardous'

Samples being sent under UN3373 should also display the appropriate symbol. This is a diamond with each side at least 50mm in size in a colour which contrasts clearly with the package background. The diamond should contain 'UN3373' in letters at least 6mm high.

