

Marek's Disease Virus Reference Laboratory

The Pirbright Institute

Guidance for sample submission for MDV PCR tests

1. E-mail correspondence to the MDVRL should be sent to MDVRL@pirbright.ac.uk and sue.baigent@pirbright.ac.uk
2. It is essential that senders make contact in advance to arrange a date for sending samples, to ensure samples arrive on a day when they can be received.
3. The Sample Submission Form should be completed and submitted by e-mail BEFORE the samples are dispatched. Please provide all 'essential' information and as much 'desirable' information as possible. On page 2, a separate line should be used for each sample.
4. Real-time PCR analyses: vMDV field virus = pathogenic strains (causative agent of Marek's disease); CVI988 and HVT = vaccine strains; MDV-2 (naturally circulating strains considered to be non-pathogenic).
5. A further paper copy of the completed Sample Submission Form must be packaged with the samples.
6. Samples should ideally be submitted in small, sealed tubes (plastic bags are not ideal, as organs and feathers can get squashed, and bag seals may leak).
7. Numbers/codes on tubes should match those given on the Sample Submission Form.
8. **Feathers:** Must be 'blood feathers' (developing feathers, with fleshy feather pulp), as hard, dry feathers cannot be tested. Ensure very dirty feathers are not submitted. Four blood feathers are sufficient for each bird. All feathers from one bird should be put in the same tube. After collection, feathers should ideally be stored frozen (-20°C) prior to shipment, but they can be stored refrigerated if they will be shipped next day.
9. **Organs:** One organ (or slice of organ) per tube (it can be difficult to separate several organs that are together in one tube). After collection, organs should be stored frozen (-20°C) prior to shipment.
10. **Poultry house dust:** Preferred dust samples are of homogeneous fine powdery consistency and pale brown in colour. Use a tube to scrape dust from chosen surface until tube is approximately half full. Replace lid. If possible, the outside of tube should be wiped clean using disinfectant or alcohol, and the lid sealed with tape. After collection, dust may be stored at ambient temperature for 1 week. For longer term storage it should be frozen at -20°C.
11. Samples should ideally be submitted chilled (with ice packs) or frozen (with dry ice) in an insulated box. (Ambient temperature is acceptable for feather and dust samples, so long as next-day delivery is ensured).
12. Please **address samples for the attention of Sue Baigent to: Marek's Disease Virus Reference Laboratory**, The Pirbright Institute, Ash Road, Woking, Surrey, GU24 0NF.
13. Please **clearly label the outer packaging with the words 'Store at -20°C upon arrival'** (all deliveries to Pirbright initially go to central stores; if a package arrives late in the day, or at a time when MDVRL staff cannot collect it, the stores staff will ensure it is safely stored at -20°C to avoid sample degradation, until it is collected by MDVRL staff).
14. Please also **include the name and affiliation/address of the sender** on the package.