

GENERAL TEST ORDERING AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION INFORMATION – FOOD SAMPLES

1. FOOD SAMPLES:

MOC at the original receiving site provides consultation with Public Health Investigator or other Public Health Professionals as required.

Consultation with the Microbiologist/Virologist On Call PRIOR to submission of samples if they fall OUTSIDE the parameters of current acceptance criteria is REQUIRED to insure prompt referral to an appropriate certified testing agency.

a. Acceptance Criteria:

ProvLab will process:

- Food for human consumption that is collected from a patient's residence, a restaurant or from a banquet
- Food for animal consumption that has been opened and exposed to humans associated with enteric bacterial infection
- Pet feces if associated with human enteric bacterial infection

Samples MUST be:

- Associated with human cases(s) or investigations(s) (may or may not have an EI# at time of submission) related to human infection **AND**
- Submitted by a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or designate (eg. PHI, EHO)

b. Rejection Criteria:

ProvLab will NOT process:

- Commercial/retail human food products for which packaging is intact (i.e. has not been opened) even if the product has been collected from a patient's residence.
- Food samples collected from commercial retail outlets including stores, markets and manufacturing/processing plants/production lines.
- Commercial animal food products for which packaging is intact (i.e. has not been opened)
- Live or dead whole animal products typically used as reptile feed (e.g. mice, chicks, crickets)
- Environmental swabs
- Litter used to house animals suspected of being the source of human infection

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c. Guidelines for Submitting Food Samples to the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health

All food and non-clinical sample testing associated with a public health investigation of foodborne disease is performed at ProvLab, Calgary.

Samples received by ProvLab, Edmonton will be sent to Calgary the same day if:

- samples arrive before 1000h Monday through Friday
- samples arrive before 0900h Saturday, Sunday and holidays

MOC/VOC at the original receiving site provides consultation with Public Health Investigator or other Public Health Professionals as required.

e. Requisition

A separate requisition (ProvLab Food Sample Submission form) must accompany EACH sample submitted for laboratory investigation.

Complete ALL fields of the requisition ([ProvLab Food Sample Submission form](#)) for EACH sample submitted.

f. Sample Submission

- Label a sterile WHIRL-PAK® bag or sterile leak-proof container for each sample to be submitted.
- Label sample with sample type/description and sample collection location.
- Ensure Sample Type and Sample Collection Location matches the respective requisition for each sample.
- Submit 100 Grams or 100mL whenever possible. If insufficient sample is submitted, bacteriological testing may need to be prioritized.
- Place sample in the labelled container using aseptic technique.
- Place the labelled WHIRL-PAK® bag or sterile leak-proof container into a larger biohazard bag and seal to prevent accidental leakage during transport.
- Place requisition within the external flap of the biohazard bag.

g. Transportation ¹

- Place all samples in a rigid-sided container or cooler and transport within 24hrs to the Laboratory.
- Samples should be stored and transported as follows:
 - Shelf-stable samples at room temperature
 - Perishable samples with sufficient ice packs to maintain refrigeration temperature (eg: between 0°C and 7°C).
 - Frozen samples with sufficient ice packs to maintain freezing temperature.
 - Do NOT allow frozen samples to thaw during shipment.
- Notify the Bacteriology laboratory when food samples are being submitted.
 - 403-944-1214 (ProvLab, Calgary)
 - 780-407-7703 (ProvLab, Edmonton)

1. Compendium of Analytical Methods Appendix B Volumes 1-3 November 2006