

LAB SERVICES

TEST POLICIES

Test Turnaround Times

- The turnaround time is calculated from the date the specimen arrives in the laboratory
- Published turnaround times are guidelines and based on full working days. Saturday is considered a working day for routine in-house Haematology, Biochemistry and Microbiology only
- Where results are delayed beyond the published turnaround time, Lab Services will inform the submitting vet by sending an updated report, or by email or telephone, and will provide an updated turnaround time

Specimen Cut-off Times

- Lab Services has established specimen cut-off times for each test type to optimise the quality of the reported result (Table 1)
- Specimens that arrive after the specimen cut-off time will not be processed
- The practice will be informed, and advised to resample

On Hold Test Policy

- Tests can be placed on hold at the clinician's request, but specimens will not be processed beyond the specimen cut-off times
- The practice will not be notified in advance that specimens are scheduled for discard

Policy for Retaining Processed Specimens

- Residual serum or plasma is stored appropriately for 2 weeks
- Stained cytology slides are stored appropriately for 12 months
- Residual extracted nucleic acid (PCR) is stored appropriately for 2 weeks
- All other specimens will be discarded after 7 days

Test Cancellation Policy

- All tests can be cancelled without charge provided the test procedure is not already in progress
- All requests for test cancellations must be submitted in writing (email lab@labservices.uk.com)
- Lab Services will acknowledge the request and will inform the submitting vet if the test can be cancelled or otherwise

Add-on Test Policy

- All requests for add-on tests must be submitted in writing (email lab@labservices.uk.com)
- Lab Services will acknowledge the request and inform the submitting vet if the test can be run or otherwise



- An add-on test cannot proceed if the residual specimen volume is insufficient, or not suitable for the test requested

Specimen Identification

- It is the responsibility of the submitting vet to ensure that all specimens are adequately labelled to maintain specimen integrity
- Please provide a minimum of patient name or ID, species, and sample date
- Unlabelled specimens are at risk of rejection or delayed processing

Expired Tube Policy

- It is the responsibility of the submitting vet to ensure that the specimen tubes used are in-date
- Lab Services will inform practices where expired tubes have been submitted and advise a resample

Incomplete Request Forms

- It is the responsibility of the submitting vet to ensure that the request forms contain all relevant information
- Where the practice details have been omitted from the form, Lab Services will make reasonable efforts to trace practices.
- Tests will be placed 'on hold' until the practice makes themselves known

Specimen Quality Policy

- Lab Services will advise practices if the test cannot be carried out on the specimens submitted where they are damaged, of poor quality, contaminated, or which do not meet the sample volume requirements. Practices will be informed by telephone, email, or by report
- Lab Services will assume responsibility for loss of or damage to a specimen once it arrives in the laboratory

Specimen Packaging and Transport

- It is the responsibility of the submitting vet to ensure that the specimens are packed to comply with transport regulations
- Guidance on specimen packaging is available here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/527069/dangerous-goods-guidance-note-17.pdf
- Specimens must be packaged to ensure that contents do not leak
- Needles/sharps cannot be submitted by courier or post
- Paperwork and specimen tubes must not be grossly contaminated



Health and Safety Policy

- Lab Services reserves the right to refuse or discard specimens that we consider to present an unacceptable risk to laboratory employees
- In such cases, practices will be informed by telephone, and appropriate advice will be given
- Where specimens are at high risk for zoonotic organisms, please record this information clearly on the request form

Laboratory Closures

- Information on specimen collections and deliveries over holiday periods will be available on the laboratory website

Delivery Cut-Off Times

- Specimens delivered to the laboratory by mail or courier after 14:30 on weekdays, or 10:30 on a Saturday will not be processed until the next working day
- Specimens hand delivered to the laboratory after 14:30 on weekdays, or 10:30 on Saturdays will not be processed until the next working day

Contingency Policy

- If Lab Services is unable to process specimens on site (e.g. equipment failure), specimens will be despatched in a timely way to the most suitable referral laboratory
- Practices will be informed by email, and the expected turnaround time will be provided

Saturday Testing of Specimens

- To avoid critical specimen deterioration over the weekend, specimens that arrive at Lab Services on a Saturday on a non-Lab Services request form will be processed by Lab Services if possible
- Practices will not be informed in advance
- All other non-critical specimens will be despatched to the preferred laboratory as usual

Test Price Policy

- Test prices are reviewed on an annual basis, and communicated to clients by email
- Lab Services reserves the right to increase prices should unexpected circumstances require it

Customer Complaints

- A copy of our Customer Complaints Policy is available on request

Test Policies

- Test policies will be maintained on the Lab Services website and updated periodically as required



TEST TYPE	Laboratory Services	
	Optimal Processing Time	Specimen Cut-off Time
Routine Haematology Tests	1-2 days	4 days
Routine Biochemistry Tests	2 days	4 days
Serology Tests	Serum/Plasma: 3 days Whole Blood: 24 hours	6 days
Urine Tests (UCC/UPC)	2 days	4 days
Fluids for Cytology	1-2 days	4 days
PCR Tests	1-2 days	5 days
Urinalysis	1 day	3 days
Urine Culture	1 day	3 days (boric acid) 1 day (without boric acid)
Fungal Culture	1-4 days	4 days
Swabs for Bacterial Culture	1-2 days	3 days
Faecal Culture	1 day	3 days (from last date if pooled)
Tissue/Fluid Bacterial Culture	1 day	3 days

Table 1. Specimen Cut-Off Details.

Example: A swab for bacterial culture taken on the 1st December arrives in the laboratory on the 5th December. The cut-off time is 3 days for this particular specimen type; therefore, as this swab is 4 days old, it cannot be processed.

