

PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK

PHLN is an Australasian collaborative microbiology group.

<http://www.health.gov.au/phln>

ACT

*Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
Department
The Canberra Hospital*

NSW

*Centre for Infectious Diseases and
Microbiological Laboratory Services*

South East Area Laboratory Service

NT

*Northern Territory Government
Pathology Service*

QLD

Pathology Queensland

*Queensland Health Forensic and
Scientific Services*

SA

*Institute of Medical and Veterinary
Science*

TAS

*Department of Microbiology and
Infectious Diseases
Royal Hobart Hospital*

VIC

*Microbiological Diagnostic Unit
(MDU) Public Health Laboratory*

*Victorian Infectious Diseases
Reference Laboratory (VIDRL)*

WA

*PathWest Laboratory Medicine,
Western Australia*

NATIONAL

*Health Emergency Planning and
Response Branch
Office of Health Protection
Department of Health and Ageing*

*CSIRO Australian Animal Health
Laboratories*

*Communicable Diseases Network
Australia*

*Private Pathology Representative
(Observer)*

*Australian Federal Police Chemical,
Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
Data Centre (Observer)*

NEW ZEALAND

*Communicable Disease Group
Institute of Environmental Science
and Research (Observer)*

*Canterbury Health Laboratories
(Observer)*

Position Paper on Hendra Specimens for Transport within Australia

Humans potentially exposed to Hendra virus or having a clinical illness suspected of being due to Hendra virus have a very low risk of actually being infected, therefore specimens collected from them are very unlikely to contain infectious Hendra virus. However, humans who are known to be infected will have infectious virus in blood and other specimens until they develop a Hendra virus-specific antibody response that neutralises the virus. Once they have developed this antibody response, the specimens are highly unlikely to contain infectious virus.

Therefore, for the purposes of transportation of samples under the IATA regulations:

Specimens (e.g. blood, nasal/throat swabs, urine) collected from patients with laboratory-confirmed Hendra virus infection who are not known to also have Hendra virus-specific antibody will be treated as UN 2814 Category A – Infectious Substance, affecting humans (infectious substances capable of causing permanent disability, life-threatening or fatal disease in otherwise healthy humans or animals), classified under IATA Hazard Class 6.2 and IATA Packing Instruction 602) and transported accordingly. Likewise, cultures of Hendra virus should be transported as Category A UN2814.

All other specimens have a minimal risk of containing infectious virus and may be transported as routine diagnostic specimens UN 3373 – Biological Substance, Category B. This includes:

- specimens collected from asymptomatic people following exposure to a Hendra virus infected animal or person
- specimens collected from people with suspected (but not yet confirmed) Hendra virus clinical illness
- serial blood specimens collected at day 21 and day 42 post exposure to test for seroconversion from a person who remains asymptomatic
- specimens collected from patients known to have been infected but who have not yet developed Hendra virus-specific antibodies.