

Occipital foramen approach for brain sampling, including sample preparation, sample transport and sample preservation



Shrikrishna Isloor*, Dilip, L. and Samrudh, M.C.
Associate Prof. & Lab. Director

KVAFSU-CVA Rabies Diagnostic Laboratory



OIE Reference Laboratory for Rabies

Dept. of Microbiology, Veterinary College, KVAFSU
Hebbal, Bengaluru, India

Preliminary Safety

- Pre-exposure immunization and regular boosters.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)



- Do not aerosolize .

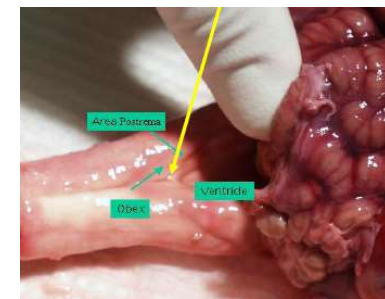
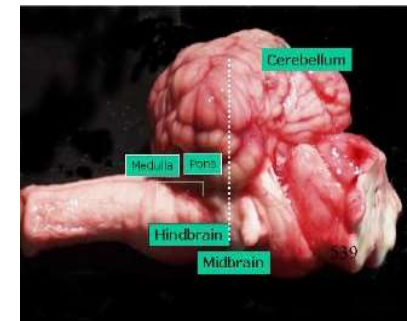
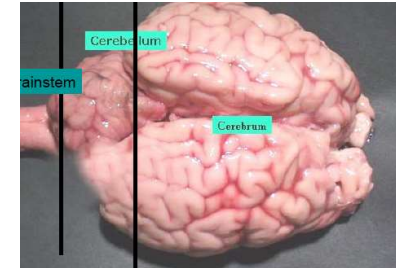
Personal Protective equipment (PPE)

- Disposable gloves
- Face mask and shield
- Eye goggles
- Hair cover /cap
- Disposable apron
- Shoe cover



Quality brain sample needed for accurate diagnosis of rabies

- Identifying the virus / its specific components using **reliable lab. tests**
- Laboratory **techniques vary in their efficiency, specificity and reliability**
- **Applied to brain tissue**, can also be applied to other organs (e.g. salivary glands)
- Proper packaging helps in proper maintenance of the samples to aid accurate diagnosis of rabies.



Collection of brain samples

- **Opening of the skull**
- **Retro-orbital route**
- **Occipital Foramen route**

Opening of the skull in necropsy room

- **Preferably brain stem, cerebellum ,Ammon's horn, thalamus, and medulla oblongata**
- **Prevent aerosols**
- **Cutting tools, scissors and scalpels, should be used with care to prevent injury and contamination**



Removal of brain from skull of dog



3 METHODS

1. hammer & chisel
2. bone saw or hack saw
3. electric saw

Removal of brain

1. Hammer & Chisel



2. Hack saw



3. Electric saw



Retro-orbital route for brain sampling

- A trocar used to make a hole in the posterior wall of the eye socket.
- A biopsy needle introduced through hole.



Occipital Foramen route for brain sampling

- A 5 mm **AI sheath/ plastic drinking straw**,
- A 2 ml **disposable plastic pipette**
- A 1–2 ml **truncated plastic syringe** introduced into the occipital foramen in the direction of an eye
- Samples from the **brain stem & cerebellum**
- When using a straw it should be pinched between the fingers to prevent material escaping when withdrawing.



Sample collecting equipment

- Scissors (sharp and blunt ended)
- Forceps
- BP blade plus holder
- AI sheath/ Straw
- Disposable syringes
- **Sample storage containers.**



Sample storage containers : Proper Handling of the Specimen

Primary Container

- ✓ Contains the clinical specimen
- ✓ A rigid one that can be tightly sealed.
- ✓ **Plastic containers of appropriate size**

Secondary Container

- ✓ Primary container is placed in a secondary container.
- ✓ A plastic or metal container with a lid or even a **suitable zip lock bag**.

Tertiary / Shipping Container

- ✓ Secondary container is placed in the **tertiary / shipping container: a thermocol box**.
- ✓ Frozen cool packs & cushioning materials put.
- ✓ Labelled as “BEWARE! BIOLOGICAL SPECIMEN FOR RABIES DIAGNOSIS. INFECTIOUS HAZARD!”

Transportation of Specimen without Preservatives

- **Common method**
- **Strictly maintain cold chain**
- The box should be labelled as **“BEWARE! BIOLOGICAL SPECIMEN FOR RABIES DIAGNOSIS. INFECTIOUS HAZARD!”**
- If the head of the animal to be submitted, immediately after decapitation, head has to be first cooled, wrapped in absorbing paper and placed in plastic bag.

Transport Using Preservative Solutions

- **Preservatives used if transit time long or refrigeration not possible.**
- Lab. technique determines the preservative to be used.
- Use of **formalin** safe since it inactivates rabies virus, but sample unsuitable for isolation / inoculation but suitable for histological studies.
- The use of **glycerine** solution does not inactivate the virus rapidly but is capable of inhibiting the growth of contaminants.
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- **Note:** DFA test may be applied to glycerol-preserved specimens after washing. If preserved in formalin, DFA test may be used only after the specimen has been treated with a proteolytic enzyme. **However, the DFA test on formalin-fixed and digested samples is always less reliable and more cumbersome than when performed on fresh tissue .**

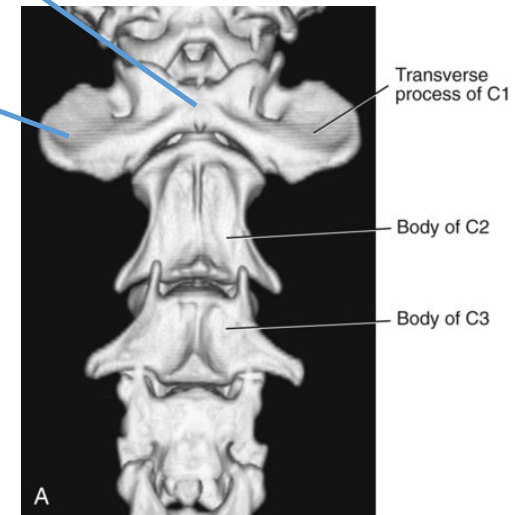
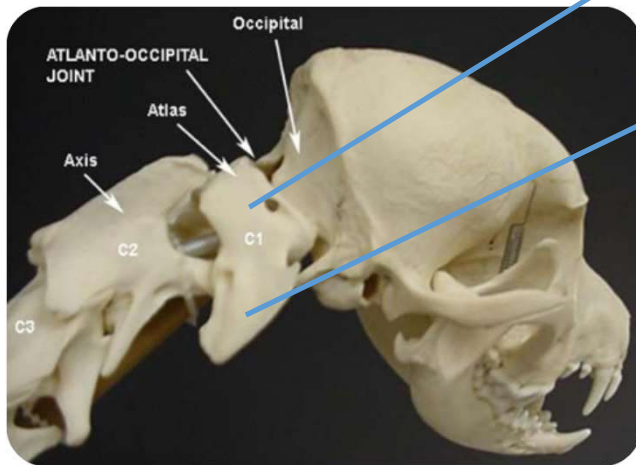
Preservative Solutions

- **Brain sample:** 10% formal saline / Zenker's fluid /50% glycerol saline
- **Salivary gland:** 50% glycerol saline
- CSF, saliva and urine: Tissue culture medium with 2% saline
- Specimens for cytology/**histopathology** : 10% neutral buffer formalin / Bouin's solution

How to locate Foramen magnum / Occipital foramen

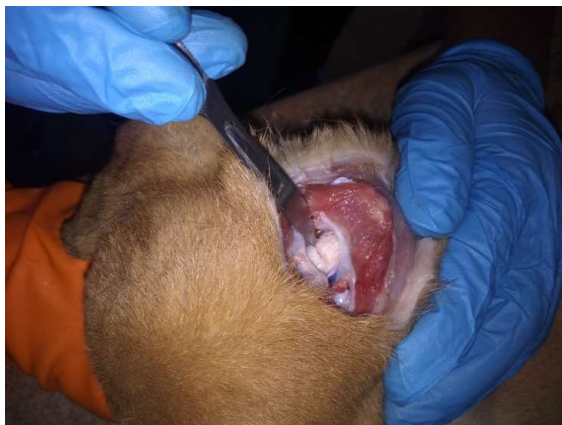
Atlas (first Cervical vertebra)

Wings of Atlas



Brain sample collection by field vets using Occipital foramen method – User friendly and simple approach

Fresh carcass:
use scissor / scalpel



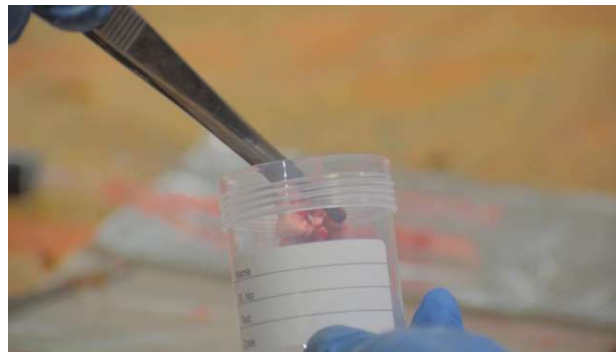
Old / preserved carcass:
use syringe / AI sheath



Locate the transverse processes of the first C1 & external occipital protuberance. A deep cut be made just behind external occipital protuberance but anterior to imaginary line connecting the transverse processes of C1.



Using the scalpel / BP blade, the brain stem portion visible is cut and the specimen collected into the primary container, closed & labelled.



Introduce an artificial insemination (AI) sheath connected to a disposable syringe deeply into the Occipital foramen and the tissue from brain stem aspirated



Packing brain tissue in Primary, Secondary and tertiary containers



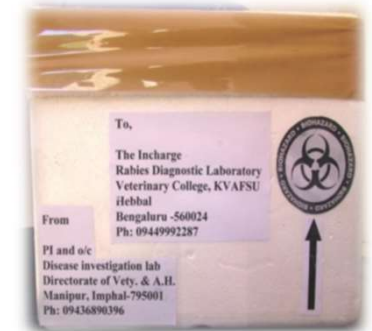
Primary container



Secondary container



Tertiary container



Occipital Foramen route for brain sampling routinely employed by trainees in the field



Brain sampling if complete decapitation of head

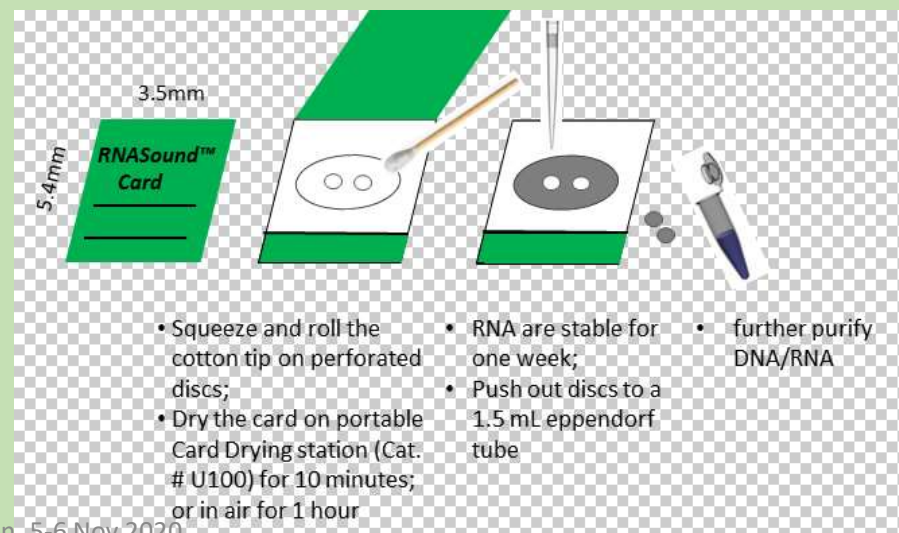


Wolf head



Preservation for molecular techniques

- ✓ **Lysis buffers** for nucleic acid extraction and RNA preservation buffers **impregnated onto filter paper** (Picard-Meyer et al., 2007).
- ✓ Fit for **transport of specimens at ambient temperature without specific biohazard precautions** for detection of viral RNA and further genetic characterisation of rabies virus strains.



Conclusion

- Veterinarian collecting samples must have undergone **PreEP**
- Use **PPEs** during sample collection
- Take **precautions** while handling , transportation to ensure the safety of the personnel and the environment
- Samples should be transported **in cold chain** to prevent decomposition. Frozen **cold packs preferred over wet ice** since it may leak through the container.
- **Triple packaging** of the sample .
- **Quality sample aids accurate diagnosis of rabies.**