

CHAPTER 5

SHIPMENT OF SPECIMENS TO THE AFIP

5-1. Packaging specimens

WARNING

Formalin is a suspected human carcinogen requiring special protective equipment. Follow the precautions in the applicable Material Safety Data Sheet. (See app A for suggested sources.) Handle formalin under a fume hood whenever possible. Goggles and portable respirators approved for formalin provide a safe and effective alternative to a fume hood. Portable formalin respirators and filter cartridges are available from several sources (para 2-1ae).

a. Tissue fixation must be according to paragraph 2-10.

b. Exposure of personnel to formalin when packaging tissues for shipment can be minimized by using the local military hospital's pathology laboratory services (fume hoods, vacuum sealers, etc.) to the maximum extent possible.

c. Remove adequately fixed tissue specimens from formalin (after 24 to 48 hours). Wrap tissue specimens in formalin-saturated gauze sponges or place tissue in formalin-soaked cloth tissue bags. Bone specimens with sharp edges must be adequately padded with formalin-saturated gauze to prevent perforation of plastic specimen bags. Pack formalin-fixed eyes in rigid specimen containers to prevent distortion of ocular structures.

d. Double-bag the tissues. Seal the wrapped tissue specimens in vacuum/heat-sealable heavy-duty plastic specimen bags, if available. Seal the first bag in a second bag. Each individual specimen container must be clearly labeled with the MWD's name and tattoo identification and, if required, the tissue identity or collection site. An index card labeled with this information in pencil or indelible ink can be included in each bag. Alternatively, the bags can be directly labeled using an indelible ink marker. Note that many types of ink are removed by formalin vapors.

e. Alternate methods of packaging wrapped tissue specimens include—

(1) Plastic specimen jars with screw-on lids, *not snap-on lids*. Seal the lid with several layers of plastic sealing wrap.

(2) Double- or triple-bagging using heavy-duty re-sealable plastic bags. To avoid bursting during shipment, remove as much air and formalin as possible.

f. *Do not ship tissues immersed in formalin*. Ship fixed tissues wrapped in formalin-saturated gauze in sealed unbreakable containers.

g. Protect the DD Form 1626 by using sealed plastic specimen bags. Remember regular ballpoint ink will disappear when exposed to formalin. Pack the DD Form 1626 with the specimen containers.

5-2. Shipping specimens

a. Correct packaging of specimen containers is essential to prevent breakage and the environmental contamination and tissue specimen dehydration that could result. Ship containers in a sturdy cardboard box lined with *two* heavy-duty plastic bags. Use adequate packing materials in sufficient amounts to ensure that specimen containers remain stable during shipment and do not contact the walls of the box. Close each plastic bag securely and seal the box with strapping or shipping tape.

b. Use cardboard or plastic microscope slide mailers to send cytology specimens. Remember, never prepare, store, or ship cytology specimens with formalin. (See para 2-9c.)

c. Complete DD Form 2834 and forward with case material.

d. Do NOT submit an SF 515 in place of DD Form 2834, as important demographic and clinical information may be omitted.

e. Include a telephone number, fax number (commercial and DSN) and e-mail address. Be prepared to provide follow-up clinical information.

f. For submission of MWD diagnostic materials to the AFIP, address the package to:

Regular Mail:

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology
ATTN: AFIP-RRR (Receiving and Accessions)
Bldg 54, Room G071
Washington, DC 20306-6000

Couriers:

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology
ATTN: Receiving and Accessions Division
6825 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20306-6000

5-3. Additional information

Direct any questions about specimen shipment to the Chief, Diagnostic Services Branch, Department of Veterinary Pathology at the AFIP at DSN 662-2600; COMM 202-782-2600; COMM Fax 202-782-9150; DSN Fax 662-9150; or e-mail <afipvet@afip.osd.mil>. AFIP maintains a home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.afip.org/>.