

AUTOPSY REFERRALS

AUTOPSY SUBMISSIONS

The Autopsy Service at the University of Pennsylvania is primarily involved in the postmortem examination of animals that were patients of the Ryan Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (MJR-VHUP). These autopsies are done for academic and educational purposes. Postmortem examinations of non-VHUP patients are routinely performed by practicing veterinarians and tissues may be submitted through our Surgical Biopsy Service.

The Autopsy Service *may* perform outside (referral) autopsies for specified cases. The following guidelines will determine if a case is eligible for autopsy submission.

1. A referring veterinarian requests autopsy for a patient under their care. This must be the veterinarian who was treating the animal at or near the time of death.
2. Please note that the following are **NOT** accepted in any instance – forensic autopsies or rabies suspects. Any cases with likely legal implications or a rabies suspected will **NOT** be accepted.
3. Animals where an autopsy or partial autopsy has been performed will not be accepted.

Autopsy Submission Guidelines

- Animals should be refrigerated (**NOT** frozen) as soon as possible after death. Severely autolyzed animals will not be accepted as this precludes a diagnosis.
- The referring veterinarian must contact the Chief of the Autopsy Service or the pathologist on duty prior to submission at **215-898-8857**. This is to provide relevant information about the case, and obtain permission for submission of the animal.
- Upon approval by the pathologist, an Autopsy Referral Form will be faxed or emailed to the referring veterinarian. This form **MUST** be completed and either: faxed to the Autopsy Service at **215-898-0719**, emailed to the pathologist (pennvethistolab@vet.upenn.edu), or submitted with the animal before the autopsy will be started.
- Copies of pertinent and recent medical records should be submitted with the form.
- The animal should be dropped off at the Ryan Veterinary Hospital at Penn Vet in coordination with the pathologist on duty between 9am and 4pm, Monday-Friday.
 - Animals will not be accepted after 4 pm on weekdays, during weekends, or holidays.

- There is a minimum \$750.00 charge for each autopsy which will be billed through our surgical biopsy service. We will only accept payment from the veterinarian referring the autopsy. This fee includes the gross examination, histopathology, written reports and private cremation. If the referring veterinarian already has an account with our Surgical Biopsy Service, we will bill that account. An account must be created if the referring veterinarian is not a current client of our service.
- Samples for Toxicology and Bacteriology may be collected at the discretion of the pathologist on duty in consultation with the referring veterinarian. Additional charges for bacteriology and toxicology will be discussed with the referring veterinarian. Viral isolation is not available at this laboratory.
- Disposition of the body should be discussed with the client by the referring veterinarian. The ONLY option available for animals following the autopsy is cremation. Ashes from private cremations will be sent by courier (FedEx or other) to the referring veterinarian or owner as requested.
- Owners should be aware that in some cases the autopsy will not reveal the cause of the patient's clinical signs or demise.
- All autopsy reports (verbal and written) will be directed to the referring veterinarian, NOT the owner. In most cases the pathologist on duty will call or email the referring veterinarian with a verbal report of the gross autopsy within one to two working days of the autopsy.
- A final report summarizing the gross and histological findings will be sent to the referring veterinarian within 3 to 4 weeks of the date of the autopsy.