Submission of Samples for Histopathology

All specimens should be fixed in at least 10 x tissue volume of 10% neutral buffered formalin in a sealed screw-top container. Identifiers e.g. owner name and animal name should be written on the sample pot to allow identification and where multiple sites or tissues are sampled, these should also be indicated to correlate with information you provide on the submission form.

Secure packaging is a legal requirement for posting samples to us. Please ensure that the sample pot is enclosed in a sealed plastic bag that includes sufficient absorbent material to soak up any leakages in the event of breakage in transit. Finally place this bag in a padded envelope, plastic or cardboard box and post ideally for next day delivery to the following address:

Veterinary Pathology Services  
c/o Central Distribution  
School of Veterinary Medicine  
University of Surrey  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU2 7XH

For local practitioners we also have a sample drop-box located outside the AX building. Please call to arrange access to this if required.

Turn-around time (TAT)

We aim to report most biopsy samples within 1-2 working days from date of receipt. Some larger samples that may need additional fixation or those requiring decalcification may take longer. If we anticipate time to reporting exceeding 4 days from receipt we will inform you and explain the reason for the delay.

Large Samples

For large samples we recommend fixation in 10% neutral buffered formalin at the practice prior to despatch to avoid transporting large volumes of formalin through the post. To aid fixation of large masses partial parallel incisions can be made at about 2cm intervals. This keeps the masses and their surgical margins intact whilst allowing good penetration of fixative. For skin masses please incise from the skin surface to preserve the integrity of the surgical margins for histological sampling. Once fixed, remove the sample from the formalin and place in a sealable plastic bag. Then double bag and include sufficient absorbent material to accommodate any leakage of residual formalin from the inner bag. Finally, package the specimen securely in a suitably sturdy plastic or cardboard box for posting.
Samples requiring decalcification
Decalcification may be needed for biopsies of or including bone or those that are mineralised or ossified. We will endeavour to process an initial soft tissue section from such biopsies, which would be reported within the standard TAT of 1-2 days. Decalcification time varies from a few hours to a few days depending on the sample size and degree of mineralisation or ossification. We aim to provide an estimate of the expected time for the final report.

Special stains
Most common special stains e.g. PAS, ZN, Gram, Toluidine Blue and other standard chromatic stains are typically carried out after the initial report at the pathologist’s request and are not charged separately. This will be indicated in the initial histopathology report and an addendum will follow when results are available. For most special stains this will be a further 1-2 days, although some techniques may take a little longer. Some more complex special stains (e.g. silver staining techniques) will carry a small surcharge as per our price structure. Similarly additional special stains carried out for clinician’s interest that are not necessarily demanded in the diagnostic process will be charged separately.

Immunohistochemistry
Where appropriate, immunohistochemical stains are typically recommended in the initial histopathology report. These are priced separately per antibody applied. For most IHCs the TAT will be around 1 week.

Complex samples
For specimens that require more detailed dissection than the standard biopsies e.g. complex anatomical excision specimens, an additional pathologist cut down fee will be charged as per our price structure.

Marking surgical boundaries and orientation
Where a specific boundary or orientation needs to be marked, the preferred method is to use sutures e.g. one suture marks the cranial border, two sutures marks the medial aspect. Surgical inks can also be used. Please do not use hypodermic needles or other sharps to mark boundaries due to risk of injury to our technicians.

Interest Only Samples
For those samples that are for clinician’s interest only, a fee 75% of our standard fee will be charged. TAT may fall outside our usual time period especially at busy times as other samples take priority.

Second Opinion Histopathology
Where a second opinion is called for on histological slides from outside the University of Surrey Vet School, we will charge as per our standard pricing plus a surcharge of £50 + VAT.
Photomicrographs & Copy Slides
Photomicrographs (e.g. jpeg format) can be supplied where required for case books, personal study or as part of publications. These are charged at £30 per tissue and include images at various magnifications as appropriate to the case.

If copy slides are wanted, we can supply these for an additional fee of £10 per block.

Teaching and Research
Following their diagnostic use histological tissues will be stored, typically as paraffin wax embedded fixed tissues. They may subsequently be put to good use for teaching purposes with our students and trainee pathologists, and also may contribute to further study as part of research projects where applicable. Where publications are made, any personal information will be anonymised.

Storage
All samples submitted for histological assessment become the property of the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Surrey. Tissues embedded in paraffin wax blocks will be stored indefinitely. Any remaining fixed wet tissues from the submitted samples will be stored only for 2 months before being disposed of by incineration.

Terms & Conditions
Please see our separate document also available in the Pathology Services part of this website for our service terms and conditions.