



# Fluorescent Antibody Virus Neutralisation (FAVN) Tests

## FAQ

January 2021

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## Is APHA an EU Approved Laboratory for rabies serology?

Yes APHA is an EU approved laboratory – see [https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement/approved-labs\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement/approved-labs_en).

## Is APHA an OIE Reference Laboratory for Rabies?

Yes, APHA is an OIE Reference Laboratory for Rabies and is authorised to test all sera for the Australian Pet Travel Scheme.

## Will APHA remain an EU approved laboratory when the UK leaves the EU?

Approval is retained by successfully completing an annual inter-laboratory aptitude test organised by the EU Reference Laboratory (EURL) for Rabies Serology, ANSES, France.

The process for retaining approval applies to all laboratories in both EU and non-EU countries and will not change when the UK leaves the EU, even in the event of a no deal exit ([https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement/approved-labs\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement/approved-labs_en)).

The inter-laboratory aptitude panels are dispatched every April and laboratories receive the results in the following October. APHA passed the 2018 exercise which allows us to retain approval until October 2019. The EURL has confirmed that we will receive the 2019 panel and there is no reason to believe that our approval will not be maintained in subsequent years. In addition to approval by the EU, the APHA serology laboratory is accredited to the highest quality standard (ISO17025) and successfully participates in additional rabies serology proficiency schemes in the UK and USA.

## How do I find out what the requirements are for travelling to the EU after the UK leaves the EU?

The government has provided advice regarding travelling to the EU. Please see the following document for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-your-pet-abroad-if-theres-no-brexit-deal>

## What is FAVN and is it different to the RNATT?

The Fluorescent Antibody Virus Neutralisation (FAVN) test is a live virus test which determines whether the animal has adequate levels of rabies antibodies following vaccination. An antibody level  $\geq 0.5$  IU/ml is deemed adequate to protect against rabies. The FAVN is an approved RNATT (Rabies Neutralising Antibody Titre Test) for monitoring the effectiveness of vaccines for the purposes of commercial and non-commercial pet travel.

## How much does the rabies serology cost?

APHA test prices can be found here:

<https://science.vla.gov.uk/Tests/SearchResults.aspx?SiteName=CDT&PriceListCategoryId=33>

## Sample submission:

### How do I send my sample to APHA?

- Each serum sample should be sent with a completed submission form (one per sample) <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/surveillance/forms/form-vlarab1.pdf>
- A minimum of 1ml serum (preferable) or 2ml clotted blood should be sent in a plain tube, marked with the owner's name, animal's name and microchip number.
- Each serum sample should be sent in an insulated leak-proof container (IATA packing instructions 650)
- Label the packaging with the following:
  - Canine/feline serum samples – no commercial value
  - Category 3 Veterinary diagnostic specimens – not restricted

### Additional requirements for samples submitted from non-EU countries:

- Submissions must be accompanied by an import licence (Appendix 1 of submission form) and labelled as follows:
  - Canine/feline serum samples – no commercial value
  - Category 3 Veterinary diagnostic specimens – not restricted
  - Packaged according with IATA Packing Instructions 650
  - Import licence ITIMP17.008
  - Your country of origin

- Indicate maximum value of the goods of \$1. Failure to do so may result in additional importation charges. APHA will not accept any additional charges, these must be paid for by the customer.
- A cover letter on headed note paper must also be enclosed, signed by the submitting veterinary surgeon describing the contents of the package (i.e. the number of serum samples submitted per species). The letter must also enclose a 'freedom from Disease Declaration' stating the following:
  - i. The serum is not derived from an animal known or suspected to be infected with a pathogen which causes a notifiable disease to which the animal from which the serum is derived is susceptible according to European Regulations\* or the Animal Health Regulations of the exporting country; and
  - ii. That the serum does not originate from an animal in a premise or region or zone of a country that is subject to official restrictions due to a notifiable disease to which the animals are susceptible according to European or other National Animal Health Regulations.

\*Council Directive 81/894/EEC of 21 December 1982 (as amended) on the notification of animal diseases within the Community
- Send your completed submission form and sample to:

Rabies Serology / Sample Reception  
 Animal and Plant Health Agency  
 Woodham Lane,  
 New Haw, Addlestone,  
 Surrey, KT15 3NB  
 United Kingdom

## Results:

### How long will it be before I receive my results?

FAVN test results are normally available within 1-2 weeks from the date the sample is received. However depending on the number of samples received this can vary. We are anticipating an increase in the number of samples received and have increased our test capacity to respond to this demand. Our maximum turnaround time is currently 14 working days. This allows for treatment and repeat testing of any haemolysed sera that fail to provide a result on first testing. Customers will not be charged for such repeat tests as this is part of our high quality service.

### What does my result mean?

A result of 0.5IU/ml or higher is considered an acceptable level of rabies virus neutralising antibodies for the purposes of pet travel. A result <0.5IU/ml is considered inadequate and booster vaccination will be required.

## How can I confirm my APHA test report is valid?

If you would like to confirm the validity of an APHA test report please contact us. We would need a scan or photograph of the report in order to confirm that APHA issued it.

Telephone: +44 (0)208 4152280

Fax: +44 (0)1932 357838

Email [lab.services@apha.gov.uk](mailto:lab.services@apha.gov.uk)

## Why has my pet's sample failed the FAVN test despite it being vaccinated?

A blood sample must be taken at least 30 days post vaccination and be successfully tested for the presence of rabies neutralising antibodies (0.5 IU/ml or above). Neutralising antibody levels wane rapidly after primary vaccination, in some cases to below the 0.5 IU/ml cut-off in as little as 5-8 weeks. However, levels can be maintained above 0.5 IU/ml in animals that have received booster vaccinations. A recommendation from a private veterinary surgeon for a booster vaccination prior to any blood sampling must therefore take into consideration the vaccination history, sampling interval and health status of the pet.

On rare occasions, some pets fail to reach the 0.5IU/ml cut-off despite a booster vaccination. In such cases, private veterinary surgeons may recommend that a different vaccine make is used for the booster vaccination to improve the probability of a successful test result.



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The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government.