

ERIE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
VECTOR CONTROL PROGRAM

462 Grider Street Room BB-122

Buffalo, NY 14215

716-961-7524

Protocol for Tick Identification Service

Specimen Collection, Transport and Storage

Updated: September 2007

Requisition Form:

The proper form for requesting tick Identification is the:

- Erie County Health Department Tick Identification Request Form revised 06/07.
- When sending multiple ticks, a separate form must accompany each tick.

Specimen Collection Information:

In removing and submitting ticks for identification, use the following procedure:

- Carefully remove ticks by grasping them as close to the skin as possible using fine tweezers and pull gently but firmly until they let go.
- Do not squeeze ticks or handle them with your bare hands.
- Place the whole tick in a tightly sealed container. Label with the victims name and date collected.
- Package carefully in a crush-proof container and send to the above address.

Specimen Transport Information:

Specimens for Tick Identification in a tightly sealed container, packed in a crush-proof package can be transported to the Vector Lab by:

- US Mail to Address listed above and on the Requisition Form.
Specimens are picked up from the mailroom at ECMC each business day.
- Hand-deliver directly to lab.
Vector Control Program
462 Grider Street – Room BB122
Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 961-7524
(716) 961-7563 fax
- If there is no one at the Vector Lab to accept the specimen, deliver to the Erie County Public Health Lab for storage/holding.
Erie County Public Health Laboratory
Clinical Center Building AA
462 Grider Street
Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 898-6105
(716) 898-6110 fax

The Public Health Lab should call the Vector Lab to notify that a specimen is being held for Tick Id. Voicemail is acceptable. The Vector Lab will pick up the specimen by the next business day.

- Hand-deliver to one of the three district offices of the Erie County Health Department.

Buffalo District Office
462 Grider Street-Building BB
Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 691-6800
(716) 691-6880 fax

Hamburg District Office
17 Long Avenue
Hamburg, NY 14075
(716) 649-4225
(716) 649-4223 fax

Lancaster District Office
85 Manitou
Lancaster, NY 14086
(716) 683-6487
(716) 683-5517 fax

The Erie County Health Department District Offices should call the Vector Lab to notify that a specimen is being held for Tick Id. Voicemail is acceptable. Place the specimen container in a “ziploc” bag, and a brown paper bag labeled “Vector Lab.” The interoffice courier can then deliver the specimen directly to the Vector Lab.

Specimen Storage/Holding Information:

- Specimens for Tick Identification must be in a tightly sealed container. This container may contain only the tick specimen with no media or it may contain alcohol as a transport media.
- The specimen container must be labeled with the victim’s/patient’s name.
- The specimen can be held at room temperature or under refrigeration whichever is more convenient.

Identification Performed/Results Reporting

- Specimens received will be processed for identification the day they are received in lab.
- Identification performed within 48 hours not including weekends and holidays using the following reference. Additional references used as needed.

“Pictorial Key to the Adults of Hard Ticks, Family Ixodidae (Ixodida:Ixodoidea) East of the Mississippi River.” James E. Keirans and Taina R. Litwak. J. Med. Entomol. 26(5): 435-448 (1989)

- Results report includes species name, common name, life stage (larva, nymph or adult), degree of engorgement (1+ to 5+), and whether the head of the tick is intact.
- Results are reported by phone and by mail. Faxed reports are available upon request.
- Specimens that are not ticks will be identified using insect keys on hand in lab or referred to:
Dr. Wayne Gall, Regional Entomologist
NYSDOH, Western Region Office
584 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202
Phone: 716-847-4508
- Exotic ticks that are not included in the identification keys will be referred to:
National Veterinary Services Laboratories
1800 Dayton Road
Ames, IA 50010
Phone: 515-663-7266