

Plague Testing: What to do if you find a wild rodent carcass



VECTOR-BORNE
DISEASE SECTION
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

This tutorial will explain the procedure for reporting, properly collecting, and submitting a wild rodent carcass to the California Department of Public Health Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory for plague testing.

**They may be
cute when they
are alive...**

**However, if you
come upon a
dead rodent, it is
possible it may
have died of
plague.**

Fleas on wild rodents may carry plague. Don't feed them and if you see a carcass, stay clear.





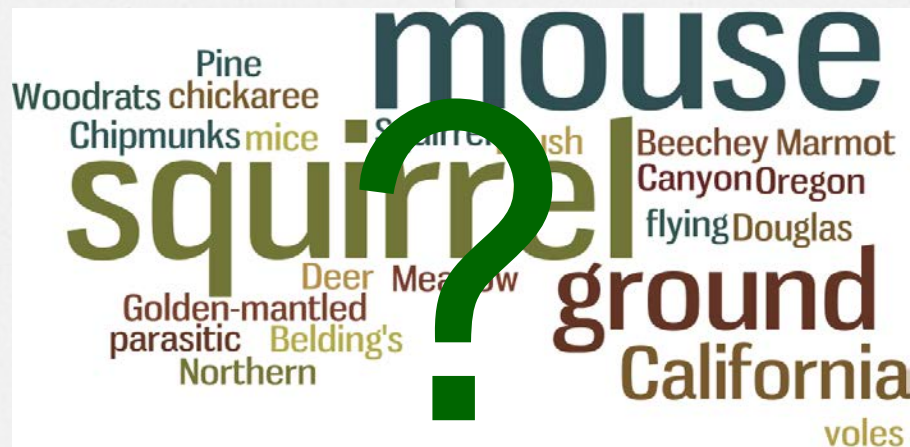
Plague occurs in many rural areas of California, particularly in foothills and mountainous areas.

If you find a dead wild rodent within the area of plague occurrence (see map), it may be suitable for plague testing.

Here is what you should do...

First, contact the VBDS Public Health Biologist (PHB) for your county to determine if the carcass is suitable for plague testing.

(If you need the contact information for your PHB, call VBDS at 916-552-9730)



These rodent species are the most important for plague testing: ground squirrels, chipmunks, woodrats, wild mice



California Ground Squirrel

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel



Chipmunks



Woodrats and Wild Mice

If your PHB tells you the carcass can be tested you will need:

- Disposable gloves
(if available)



- Several clear, plastic, sealable bags

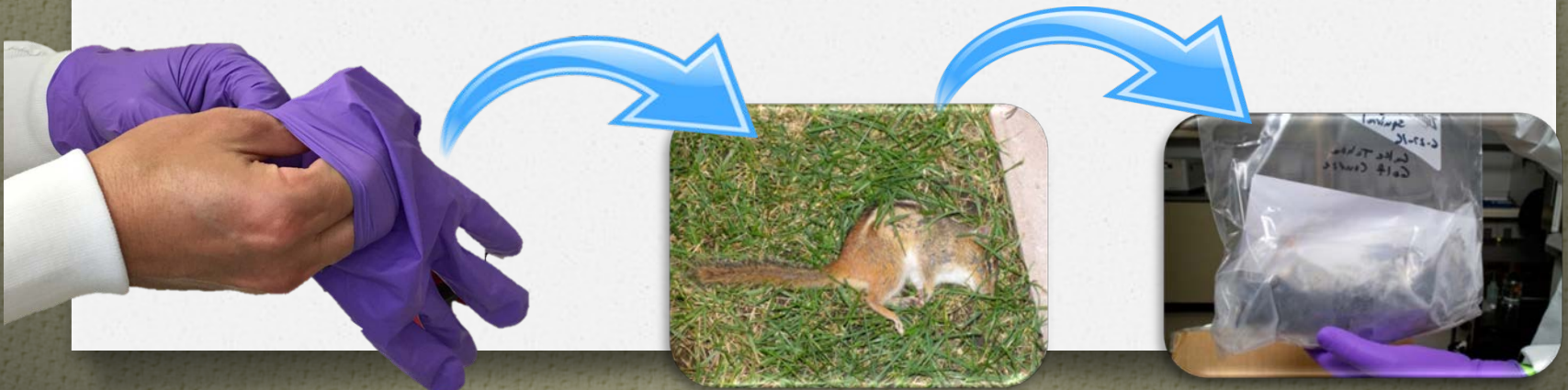


1. Put on disposable gloves

Note: If you don't have gloves, use a clear, plastic, sealable bag turned inside out as a glove to pick up the animal

2. Pick up carcass and place it in the clear, plastic, sealable bag

3. Secure the bag

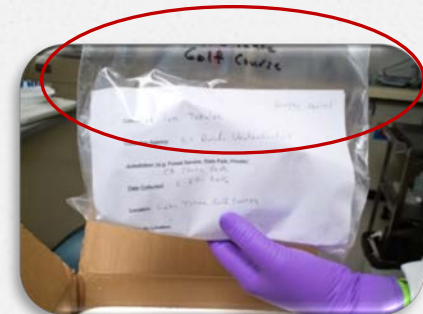


4. Place the 1st bag containing the carcass in a 2nd clear, plastic, sealable bag

5. Seal the bag

6. **Important! If there is more than one carcass, repeat the procedure with additional bags.**

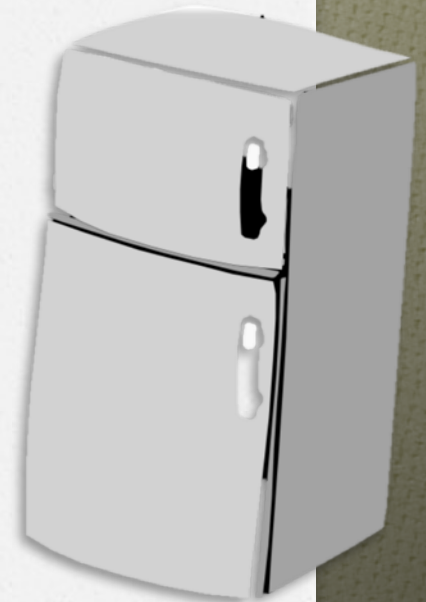
7. Write collection site, date, and time on the outside of the bag(s) with a Sharpie



8. Place the bag in a freezer (or refrigerator if no freezer is available) until ready for shipment.



OR



**Now that the
carcass is
bagged and
frozen...**



Let's talk about shipping the carcass

**Shipping should be done within 24
hours of carcass collection**



1. Obtain a Plague Testing (Carcass) Submission Form from your PHB or from Appendix C of the Plague Compendium

Complete as much of the form as possible

Plague Testing Submission Form

VECTOR-BORNE DISEASE LABORATORY

Collector(s): _____

Collecting agency: _____

Jurisdiction (e.g. Forest service, private, etc.) _____

Date Collected: _____

Location (general) _____

Specific location (e.g. campsite number, by dumpster) _____

County: _____

Elevation: _____

Lat/Long: _____

Comments about condition/behavior: _____

2. Place the double-bagged carcass inside an insulated (Styrofoam) shipping container, along with **blue ice or 1-2 frozen water bottles** and additional packing materials (newspaper or packing peanuts), if necessary



3. Place the completed carcass submission form in the box with the Styrofoam container. For more than one carcass, tape the forms to the outside of applicable double-bagged carcass.



4. Secure the box

5. Tape a 'Biological Substance, Category B/UN3373' label on the outside of the box. The label can be found in Appendix C of the Plague Compendium.

**BIOLOGICAL
SUBSTANCE,
CATEGORY B**



Ship overnight to:

**California Department of Public Health
Specimen Receiving**

Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory

850 Marina Bay Parkway

Richmond, CA 94804

(510) 412-6254



Your PHB will contact you with any positive results, typically within two weeks of receiving the carcass.

For questions or to get the contact information for the PHB serving your county please call:

California Department of Public Health
Vector-Borne Disease Section
(916) 552-9730

References

California Compendium of Plague Control

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/CAPlaqueCompendium.pdf>)

California Department of Public Health
Plague webpage

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Plague.aspx>)