



REFERENCE GUIDE

REDUCING THE RISK OF NON-VIABLE SAMPLES

Occasionally we receive samples that unfortunately cannot be used for testing. To try to reduce the risk of this situation occurring, listed below are some suggestions for the top 4 sample issues we encounter.

1. HAEMOLYSED - CAN PREVENT TESTING IF EXTREME

- Book ample time for sampling, making use of topical anaesthetic creams for more anxious patients.
- Do not use excessive alcohol to swab the site and ensure it is dry prior to sampling; if aspirated, alcohol can damage cells within the blood.
- Occlude the vein for the minimum time possible.
- Use a 21-gauge needle in dogs and 23-gauge needle in cats if possible.
- Avoid moving in and out of the vein, and excessive suction, when collecting blood; use a different site if a haematoma forms rather than trying to sample through it.
- After sampling, remove the needle from the syringe entirely before slowly decanting the blood into the tubes; avoid shaking the sample.
- Allow the blood to clot for approximately 30 minutes at room temperature before spinning down; balance the centrifuge before use, and separate the serum from the sample as soon as completed.
- Always send serum rather than whole blood, where possible. Whole blood can be sent but double the volume is required and it is much more likely to haemolyse.
- Store the sample in the fridge and post as soon as possible. Avoid posting on a Friday, to minimise extended time in the post where temperature is not controlled.

2. LIPAEMIC - CAN PREVENT TESTING IF EXTREME

- For dogs and cats, fasting for 8 - 12 hours (an overnight fast with free access to water) is often helpful to reduce the likelihood of lipaemia.
- Repeat sampling a couple of hours later may produce a less lipaemic sample.
- Collecting and centrifuging a larger volume of blood may yield a sufficient sample between the lipid layer and red blood cells; refrigeration of the sample can also help the separation.
- Centrifugation at a higher-than-normal speed can assist in clearing the lipid layer.

3. INSUFFICIENT SAMPLE

- Remember the volume stated on the submission form is the minimum required, more is always good!
- Separated serum is always preferable to whole blood to reduce the risk of haemolysis. If you have to send whole blood, it should be at least double the volume required.
- When using gel tubes for serum, remember to spin them down and ensure that the gel isn't included in the volume.
- Send sufficient serum for all requested tests, and ideally any additional tests you may decide to run depending on the results.

4. WRONG BLOOD COLLECTION TUBES

- Samples must be submitted in either plain tubes (white top, or red top if using a vacutainer) or serum gel tubes (brown top).

To check you are using the correct type of tube, visit the FAQs section of the Nextmune Practice Portal at nextmunelaboratories.co.uk/login

REMEMBER!

If possible, before discharging the patient, check the separated serum volume is sufficient; although we can run some haemolysed and lipaemic samples, ideally it should also be clear of these issues.

Nextmune offers a **free of charge serum storage facility** so you can sample at your convenience and test when you are ready. Just tick the storage option on your submission form.

