

FAQs for Cervid Dual Path Platform (DPP) VetTB Assay® for Bovine Tuberculosis

Q. What is the DPP test?

A. The DPP® Antibody Test is a serologic test used to test for bovine tuberculosis (bTB) antibodies in farmed and captive cervids.

Q. Is there a comprehensive Veterinary Services Guidance document describing the specific use of the DPP, including detailed collection and submission instructions?

A. Yes, the guidance document can be found in [VSG 6701.5](#).

Q. Which cervid species can I use the DPP test on?

A. The DPP test is approved for use in elk, red deer, white tail deer, fallow deer, mule deer, and reindeer. Sika and axis deer may also be tested using DPP under a pilot project.

Q. What type of sample is required for the test?

A. For each cervid tested, at least 2 ml of refrigerated serum must be submitted in a blood serum collection tube, such as a red top tube. The whole blood in the original tube is allowed to clot and centrifuged so the serum can be transferred to a separately labeled clean tube. If a serum separator tube is used, it must also be centrifuged, and the serum transferred to a new, clean tube.

Q. Who is authorized to collect and submit samples?

A. Only Designated Accredited Veterinarians who have received supplemental training on bTB testing, including DPP testing, are authorized to collect and submit samples.

Q. I am an accredited veterinarian but have not been trained as a Designated Accredited Veterinarian. May I submit samples using the DPP test?

A. No. You must be a Designated Accredited Veterinarian who has received Supplemental DPP test training to collect and submit samples for DPP testing on cervids.

Q. How can I become a Designated Accredited Veterinarian?

A. Contact your local [APHIS Veterinary Services Area](#) office to receive information on the supplemental DPP test training and to become a Designated Accredited Veterinarian.

Q. If I am a Designated Accredited Veterinarian, may I choose either the single cervical skin test (SCT) skin test or the DPP test to assess the status of bTB in cervids?

A. Yes, either the DPP or the SCT may be selected by the veterinarian. Animals that are non-negative on the DPP will be retested after 30 calendar days with the DPP. Animals that are responders on the SCT will be retested with the Comparative Cervical Test (CCT).

Q. Why is additional training needed if the test only involves submitting a blood sample?

A. In order to perform bTB testing of any kind (skin testing, serological testing, etc.) in cervids, a veterinarian must be knowledgeable not only in technique but also in the regulations under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Program. Additionally, many tests performed must adhere to additional requirements, such as those for import/export and for establishing and maintaining accredited cervid herds. The additional training provides this information.

Q. Can I send the serum sample to any laboratory for testing?

A. No. Serum samples must be sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. Be sure to obtain permission from the [APHIS VS Area Veterinarian in Charge \(AVIC\)](#) in your State to submit the sample(s) to NVSL prior to sample shipment.

Q. When do samples need to be received by NVSL?

A. Samples must be received by NVSL within 10 calendar days of collection. Samples must be received Monday through Friday and must not be shipped to arrive at NVSL on weekends or federal holidays. Samples received on the weekend will be considered to have been received on the following business day. Samples received on a federal holiday will be considered received the following business day and classified as not meeting submission requirements if this exceeds 10 calendar days from collection.

Q. Will the test be conducted on samples received more than 10 calendar days after collection?

A. NVSL will notify USDA APHIS Veterinary Services Cervid Health staff of any samples received after 10 calendar days of collection. Cervid health will notify State Animal Health Official (SAHO). NVSL will hold testing these samples and proceed with testing only if samples are classified as valid per SAHO/ USDA APHIS Veterinary Services Cervid Health staff.

Q. Do all States and Countries accept the DPP as an official bTB test for cervid herd accreditation and import purposes?

A. You must verify with the State of residence of the animals, the importing State, or

the importing country to determine if their animal health regulations allow the use of the DPP as an official testing method for cervids.

Q. If I am also testing a cervid for brucellosis, may I collect one blood sample, and have it tested for both bTB and brucellosis?

A. No. When also testing a cervid for brucellosis, an additional tube of whole, clotted blood must be collected and submitted to an approved brucellosis testing laboratory, accompanied by the official brucellosis testing chart [VS Form 4-33](#). If samples are submitted for both brucellosis and DPP testing at NVSL, a single blood tube can be submitted for both the tests with a single VS 10-4 submission form requesting both the tests. It is the submitter's responsibility to ensure there is enough sample for testing.

Q. What happens if the DPP test result is positive?

A. If the DPP test has a positive result, the animal will be subject to quarantine, and a second DPP test will be performed no sooner than 30 calendar days later. Animals testing positive on the second test will be classified as reactors.

Q. Can cervids that respond to the SCT skin test then be retested with the DPP?

A. No. The bTB skin test and serologic tests cannot be used in combination or interchangeably. Cervids classified as responders by testing positive on the SCT must be retested by regulatory veterinarians using the CCT.

Q. Can accredited veterinarians or producers obtain the DPP test for their own use as an "unofficial test"?

A. No. Any tuberculosis test conducted in species under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Program is an official test as defined in the *Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations*, (9CFR Part 77). All results must be reported to SAHO within a specified time after the test was administered.

Q. Can DAV's perform retesting of DPP positive animals?

A. First-time DPP positive animals are classified as bTB suspects and repeat testing should be performed by a Regulatory VMO, however, AVIC may approve a DAV to perform the test with concurrence of the SAHO.

Q. Is the DPP's specificity affected by exposure to other mycobacterial antigens known to cross-react in bovine bTB tests, such as *Mycobacterium avium* or in herds infected with Johne's (*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*)?

A. The antibodies detected by the DPP are not known to cross-react with antibodies for *Mycobacterium avium*, *M. paratuberculosis*, or most environmental mycobacteria. However, *M. kansasii* shares certain antigens with *M. bovis*; therefore, animals exposed to *M. kansasii* may yield a DPP false-positive test result.

The final culture results on the animal tissues will determine which Mycobacteria are present. An animal is classified as negative to bTB when Mycobacteria other than *M. bovis* are cultured.

Q. May I perform the DPP test on animals that have only producer tags as identification?

A. No. Official identification recognized by APHIS must be present on each animal tested with the DPP. Identification numbers must be recorded on the VS 10-4/10-4a and VS 6 -22 to correspond to the sample submitted for testing.

Q. How can I receive a DPP sample submission kit?

A. Designated Accredited Veterinarians may submit serum samples using their own compliant shipping container using a 24-hour delivery service. The U.S. Postal Service does not deliver directly to NVSL. You may also order a DPP submission kit that includes shipping material, two 40-section tube boxes with dividers, 2 ice packs, and a paid shipping label to NVSL. Blood tubes or sample collection supplies are not included. For more information on how to order a DPP sample submission kit or on compliant shipping boxes, please contact NVSL at (515) 337-6200 or email APHIS-NVSLUserfee@usda.gov.

Q. What is the NVSL laboratory charge to conduct the DPP test?

A. DPP test fee can be found in the “[NVSL Catalog](#)” or contact NVSL by email at APHIS-NVSLUserfee@usda.gov.

Q. How are payments made to NVSL for the DPP test?

A. The Designated Accredited Veterinarian submitting the sample will be responsible for test payment. NVSL accepts the following payment methods: check, money order, or bank draft (US dollars) — make payable to USDA; credit card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover) — include the credit card number and expiration date on the submission form. Bill to USDA Account -- write the account number in the designated area on the submission form.

If you have questions about your bill or reagent orders, or if you would like to set up a user fee account at NVSL, contact the User Fee Help Line at 515-337-6200 or nvsl_concerns@usda.gov. For more information, visit [User Fees for Services at the NVSL](#).

Q. When will I receive the test results?

A. Results will be reported to the submitting Veterinarian within 5 business days excluding the day of arrival of samples at NVSL, barring any testing issues or delays from submissions not meeting submission requirements.

Q. How will the test results be reported?

A. Test results will be provided to the submitting Veterinarian by email associated with their submitter account.

Q. What if a DPP test animal dies or needs to be euthanized before test results are completed at NVSL?

A. Occasionally there are delays in DPP test completion due to test kit shortages at NVSL. If an animal dies or needs to be euthanized for any reason before results are completed, RHC recommends necropsy and tissue sample submission to NVSL as a precautionary measure to determine disease status of the animal. If the resultant DPP test is positive and a necropsy not performed, the disease status would be considered undetermined, and the herd would have to remain under quarantine and undergo additional herd testing.

Q. Is the DPP test approved for axis or sika deer?

A. Yes, under a pilot project. The protocol for testing axis and sika deer is the same as existing guidance for other species however, the positive cutoff value is 200 Relative Light Units (RLU).