

3 February 2026

Dear Public Health Laboratory,

RE: Nipah Virus Testing

In the setting of the recently described outbreak of Nipah virus in West Bengal, India, we would like to advise laboratories that we have a NATA-accredited Nipah virus RT-PCR available for testing for patients with appropriate clinical presentation and epidemiology.

The recommended specimen types for testing include nose and throat swab, respiratory samples (sputum/bronchoscopy), EDTA blood (3 ml), urine (5 ml) and CSF (1 ml). Samples from suspected Nipah virus cases are classified as Category A biological hazard class (Assigned UN2814; IATA Hazard Class 6.2, Packing Instruction 602; proper shipping name "Infectious substances, affecting humans"). As such, these samples should be packaged appropriately for transport and transported via a reputable courier (e.g. World Courier). Appropriate chain of custody documentation is recommended for these samples, with the courier requested to telephone the VIDRL Laboratory Manager On Call on 0438 599 439 upon specimen arrival at VIDRL.

As Nipah virus is a risk group 4 organism which requires physical containment level 4 processing, it is important that any suspected cases are discussed immediately with VIDRL to ensure appropriate specimen transport and processing. Please phone the VIDRL Registrar during business hours (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm) on 0427 285 781 or the VIDRL Laboratory Manager On Call (outside of business hours) on 0438 599 439.

Non-urgent general enquiries can be directed to Dr Kathy Jackson (Principal Scientist) at Kathy.Jackson@vidrl.org.au or Mr Thomas Tran (Virus Identification Laboratory Section Head) at Thomas.Tran@mh.org.au.

Kind regards,

Dr Chuan Lim

Acting Director

Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL)