

ANGELL PATHOLOGY SERVICES – NECROPSY

The Pathology Department at the Angell Animal Medical Center-Boston is pleased to offer necropsy services to primary care veterinarians and their clients.

Why Submit to Angell's Necropsy Service?

At Angell Pathology, we understand that sometimes questions remain unanswered at the time of a pet's death. A necropsy examination may provide answers to some of these questions. Goals of necropsy include determining the cause of death/morbidity; evaluating the extent of disease; identifying underlying or concurrent disease processes which may have influenced a pet's clinical signs or response to treatment; and educating the individuals (clients, veterinarians, technical staff, and pathologists) involved in the pet's care. The detailed, comprehensive necropsy report includes an interpretive comment to address specific concerns posed by the submitter. Angell Pathology takes pride in treating each pet with care and respect, even after death. As with any pathology submission, select necropsy cases may be reviewed in rounds to allow open discussion among veterinary staff members involved in the case.

Necropsy Services Offered at Angell

Full necropsies can be performed on dogs, cats, and small exotic pets (such as rabbits, ferrets, reptiles, and birds) by a board-certified anatomic pathologist at Angell Animal Medical Center. The necropsy examination will include histopathology of collected tissue samples, at the discretion of the pathologist. Ancillary tests (e.g., bacterial culture or immunohistochemistry) will incur an additional charge to the submitter and will only be performed with the submitter's approval. It is important to note that Angell Pathology requires all pets submitted for necropsy to be cremated following the procedure; ashes can be returned to the owner if requested at the time of submission.

Turnaround Time and Additional Information

Necropsies can be performed Monday through Friday at Angell Pathology. Please contact the laboratory at 617-541-5014 to confirm pathologist availability prior to referring a case. Final results are typically reported within 7-14 days, to allow time for additional processing (such as decalcification of bone) if necessary.

For a complete list of available tests, submission forms, or sample requirements, please contact us at 617-541-5014 or visit our website at angell.org/lab.

Submitting a Necropsy Case at Angell

- The individual bringing a pet for postmortem examination will meet with an Angell veterinarian through the ER service to discuss the case. The Angell veterinarian will facilitate submission to pathology. The pet's primary care veterinarian can complete a necropsy submission form in advance, available on our website at angell.org/lab, to send with the pet at the time of submission.
- Necropsy is most valuable when performed promptly following death (less than 12 hours), but may still yield relevant information if performed within 24-48 hours of death depending on postmortem preservation. In the event that a pet cannot be brought to Angell immediately following death, the body should be kept cool (refrigerated). Refrigeration will reduce, but will not eliminate, postmortem decomposition. Freezing, which can introduce significant artifacts, is only indicated if there will be a delay of multiple days between the death and submission of the animal.
- The deceased pet can be transported to Angell by the client, veterinarian, or a representative of the veterinarian. This individual will be required to sign a necropsy release form at the time of submission.
- Please clearly indicate on the necropsy requisition form if an infectious disease is suspected so appropriate precautions can be taken and testing can be performed, if indicated. Specific examples include but are not limited to rabies and other potentially zoonotic diseases.

Important Points About Necropsy for Veterinarians and Pet Families

- There is no guarantee that the cause of death will be determined in every case.
- Reduced sample quality, such as occurs with postmortem decomposition, can preclude a final diagnosis.
- The pet's body will not be released to the veterinarian/owner following necropsy; Angell Pathology requires cremation with the option of the pet's ashes being returned to the owner. Cremation incurs an additional fee, separate from the cost of necropsy.
- Ancillary tests, such as bacterial culture or toxicology testing, can incur additional charges to be paid by the submitter.
- Microscopic examination of tissues (histopathology) and collection of tissue samples for ancillary tests will occur at the pathologist's discretion.
- Necropsy samples, findings, and/or photographs may be used for teaching purposes, quality control programs, or scientific publication.