

MAMNUAL OF REMOVING/DECAPITATING ANIMAL HEADS FOR TESTING RABIES

MATERIALS NEEDED

- ✓ Sharp Knife/Feather Blade
- ✓ Feather Blade Holder
- ✓ Protective Clothing – Disposable gloves, Disposable mask, safety goggles/glasses, Cover-alls/apron
- ✓ Cleaning Supplies – Detergent powder, Disinfectant (Lysol/Zonrox), Paper towels, Garbage bags

PROCEDURE

- 1 Lay the animal on its back and extend the head by bending neck back over the edge of the table/sink.
- 2 Locate the larynx. Using a sharp knife/blade, make an incision through the skin right below the larynx and continue cutting downwards through the trachea and esophagus until you reach the backbone (Figure 1).
- 3 Find atlas which is wider than other neck bone. Locate the membrane covering the spinal cord between the atlanto-occipital joint (the first vertebrae and the skull). This will be visualized and palpated as the animal's head is flexed and extended.
- 4 Disarticulate the joint by manually hyperextending the head and manually tearing the ligaments. You will hear and feel a snap when this is accomplished. It is also possible to dissect the ligaments connecting the joint. (NOTE: Do not use an axe, power saw or hatchet because of the danger created by flying debris)
- 5 The remaining muscle and skin can be cut with the sharp knife/blade to completely free the head from the body.
- 6 Instruments and contaminated surfaces should be disinfected with either alcohol (40-70% ethanol), Clorox (100ppm), iodine (25ppm) or quaternary ammonium compounds (200 ppm).
- 7 The body should be disposed of properly by burial or incineration according to local regulations and guidelines.

IMAGE



Figure 1 The position of larynx and cutting point.

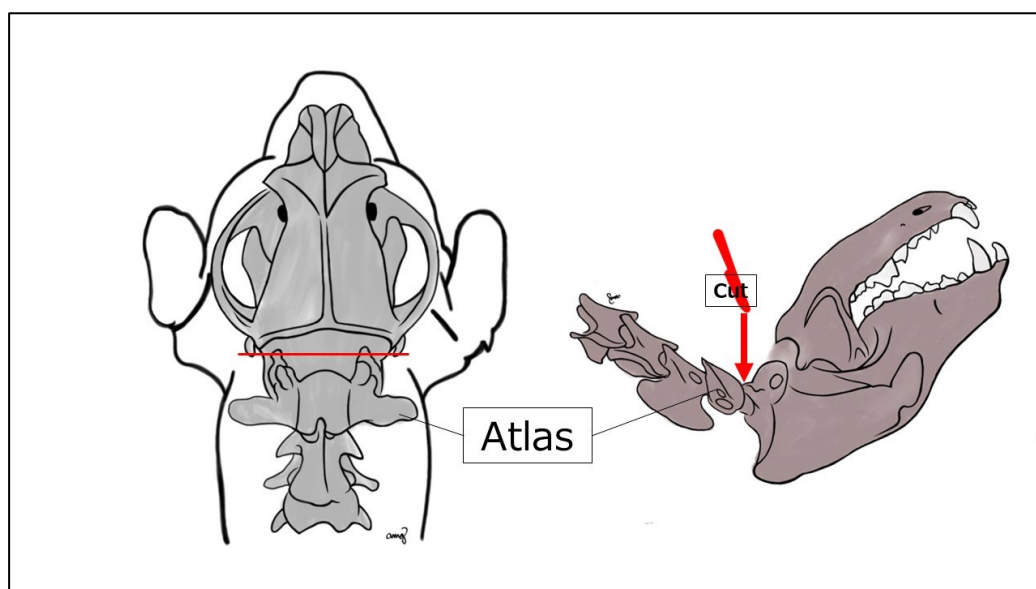


Figure 2. Atlas and atlanto-occipital joint

REFERENCE

New Mexico Department of Health. (2011, June). *New Mexico Department of Health*. Retrieved from Removing Animal Heads for Rabies Testing: <https://www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/guide/950/>