



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
A Nationally Accredited Laboratory

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NOTICE REGARDING FORENSIC BIOLOGY (DNA)

To: All Agencies Served by Department of Forensic Science Laboratories
From: Linda C. Jackson, Director 
Date: March 22, 2021
RE: Impact of Shortage of DNA Testing Supplies on Forensic Biology Case Processing

The Forensic Biology (DNA) Section is currently experiencing a shortage of DNA testing supplies due to the fact that these supplies are also used by COVID-19 testing laboratories. The supplies have a direct impact on the use of robotics in the testing of forensic samples, which DFS relies on for case processing. This is a nationwide issue impacting crime laboratories across the country, and DFS anticipates the shortage will continue into the summer, and perhaps beyond, as manufacturers attempt to increase production.

Due to the limited supplies, robotic processing of samples has been greatly reduced, resulting in longer completion times for DNA testing and an increase of backlogged cases. The Forensic Biology Section statewide has re-directed resources to manually process samples and has had to take further action in re-prioritizing which cases are being processed. Evidence in crimes against persons cases and cases with upcoming court dates are being given highest priority, while cases related to other crimes (e.g., property crimes) are being processed on a limited basis, as the laboratory is able.

We recognize the impact that increased turnaround times has on the criminal justice process and will continue our efforts to obtain additional supplies. However, we wanted to advise our users to expect longer turnaround times for DNA cases and, unfortunately, we do not expect the issue to be resolved quickly.

For general questions about the supply shortage and its impact on case processing, please contact Biology Program Manager Brad Jenkins at (804) 588-4025. For case specific questions, please contact the Forensic Biology Supervisor at the DFS laboratory that provides services to your agency:

Central (Richmond)	Lisa Schiermeier-Wood	(804) 588-4083
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