Biology department

General information for Proficiency Testing (PT) and Reference Materials (RM)

Table of contents

Terms 2
Contact information 3
E-mail 3
General information 3
Proficiency testing 3
Reference materials 3
Expectations on customers and participants 3
Accreditation 3
Are you accredited? 3
Registration and ordering 3
How do I register as a new customer? 3
How do I register for participation in a PT round? 4
How do I order reference materials? 4
Shipping 4
Which shipping options are available? 4
Who is responsible for the transport and for customs documentation? 4
When will I receive my samples? 4
I haven't received my samples – what do I do? 4
Are the samples stable during transport? 5
Sample storage 5
Exceptions 5
Safety information 5
Payment 5
Basic requirements 5
For customers in Sweden 5
For customers outside Sweden 6
Delivery and invoice address 6
Proficiency testing 7

Where can I find old PT reports? 7
Do you offer PT with matrix? 7
When do I receive instructions for sample preparation and analysis? 7
Do we need to perform all analyses in the PT round? 7
Which methods can I use? 7
Can I report results for more than one method? 7
I cannot report results on the website. What do I do? 7
I'm not certain of my results. Should I report them? 7
I'm not certain of my results, can I get new samples and repeat the analysis before reporting? 7
Can I report qualitative results in a quantitative analysis? 8
I reported the wrong results? What do I do? 8
I didn't receive a confirmation that my results were submitted. What do I do? 8
The reporting deadline has passed, can I still report results? 8
Can I order follow-up samples? 8
What is the difference between the preliminary and the final report? 8
Reference materials 9
Are your reference materials certified (CRM)? 9
My results are outside the limits provided in the instructions for the RM. What is wrong? 9
Complaints, suggestions for improvement and other comments 9
Supplier assessments 10
The principle of public access to information 11
More information: 11

Terms

In this document, **Customer** and **Participant** are used interchangeably. They both refer to the company, organisation or individual which participates in **proficiency testing (PT)** or that buys **reference material (RM)**. **Sample** refers to the individual vials used as test items in PT and the individual vials with RM. **Webpage** may refer to any of the following webpages, and their respective sub-pages:

PT: www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/PT-micro

RM: www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/RM-micro

Registration for PT: www2.slv.se/absint

Biology department

Contact information

E-mail

Proficiency testing and reference materials: micro@slv.se

General information

Proficiency testing

The Swedish Food Agency offers microbiological PT with freeze-dried artificial food and drinking water samples. Manufacture, quality control and PT organisation is done in accordance with our SS-EN ISO/IEC 17025 and SS-EN ISO/IEC 17043 accreditations. All microorganisms in our samples belong to hazard groups 1 and 2 as defined by the Swedish Work Environment Authority.

More detailed information is available in the **PT Protocol** and **Safety Data Sheet** on our webpage.

Reference materials

As a complement to the proficiency testing, the Swedish Food Agency manufactures a number of RM for internal quality control of food and drinking water microbiological analyses. The RM are manufactured and subjected to quality control in the same way as the PT samples, but without a specific accreditation. A list of current RM and prices, as well as a safety data sheet, is available on our webpage.

Expectations on customers and participants

All customers are expected to:

- Have the relevant permits, facilities and expertise to handle hazard group 1 and 2 microorganisms.
- Inform the Swedish Food Agency when their contact information (address, e-mail etc.) needs to be updated.

PT participants are additionally expected to:

- Analyse the samples using relevant method for the respective analyses and target organisms.
- Report results and method information on the website within the time frames of the respective schemes.

Accreditation

Are you accredited?

Yes. The Swedish Food Agency is accredited by Swedac (the accreditation agency in Sweden) for the analyses that are included in our PT and RM (SS-EN ISO 17025 accreditation). We're also accredited for organising PT (SS-EN ISO 17043 accreditation).

Registration and ordering

How do I register as a new customer?

You register on our webpage: www2.slv.se/Absint/NewParticipant

How do I register for participation in a PT round?

You can register after login at our webpage: www2.slv.se/absint

How do I order reference materials?

Place your order of RM here: www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/RM-micro

Shipping

Which shipping options are available?

Within Europe, we offer to send samples with the following options:

- Normal post
- Registered mail
- Courier

Outside Europe, samples are as a standard option always sent with courier.

Current prices for the different transport options are listed on our webpages.

Who is responsible for the transport and for customs documentation?

It is the responsibility of the customer to have valid permits for sample import and to provide documentation that may be required e.g. by customs to the Swedish Food Agency well in time before shipping.

The respective postal service and/or courier is responsible for the samples during transport. The Swedish Food Agency is not liable for delays or damage to the samples during transport.

When will I receive my samples?

PT samples are usually shipped 1–2 weeks before the period of analysis for the respective PT round.

RM samples are usually shipped within 1–2 weeks after we've received your order.

Samples are in general sent at the beginning of each week, to avoid that the package is being stored at a post office over the weekend.

I haven't received my samples – what do I do?

If you have a tracking number, please check the link to see where your shipment is located.

Shipment with courier normally takes 1–2 days within Europe, but sometimes up to 1 week. Shipment with post normally takes 2–3 days within Europe, but sometimes up to 2 weeks. Delivery times outside Europe may be longer than this.

Unusually long delivery times and delays are often due customs inspections, which is outside of our control. Contact us at micro@slv.se for assistance if transport exceeds the expected delivery time. Please remember to provide your **order number** when contacting us, as it will simplify a quick resolving of the issue.

For some destinations, extra paper work is required for customs clearance, which typically needs to be addressed prior to shipment. Please contact your local customs office if you are a new customer to see which permit(s) may be required for your country.

Are the samples stable during transport?

Most of our samples are stable for 3–4 weeks at room temperature, though some samples and microorganisms may be more sensitive. This includes e.g. samples containing *Campylobacter* spp. and *Pseudomonas* spp. See "Sample storage" below.

Sample storage

Upon arrival at the laboratory, the PT and RM samples should be kept in a freezer. The freezer should maintain a temperature between –20 °C and –55 °C.

Storage below –55 °C it not recommended, since it may have a negative impact on the rubber stopper in the vials, leading to loss of vacuum and decreased viability for the microorganisms.

Exceptions

- Vials that contain ***Campylobacter*** **spp.** The concentration of *Campylobacter* spp. will decrease over time when the vials are kept at room temperature, which may be measureable even after just a few days. Transport with courier is recommended if you experience low or false-negative results.
- ***Pseudomonas*** **in RM Dw 2022:A**. The concentration of *Pseudomonas* spp. will decrease over time when the vials are kept at room temperature, which may be measureable even after just a few days. Transport with courier is recommended if you experience low or false-negative results.

Safety information

All microorganisms in our PT and RM samples belong to hazard groups 1 and 2.

More detailed information about our samples is available in our **safety data sheet**, which is available on our webpage: https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/PT-micro

Payment

Basic requirements

Payment is due at the date stated on the invoice. (Normally within 30 days.)

The invoice number should be included with all payments.

A freight charge is always added to orders, unless stated otherwise.

Prices are without VAT, unless stated otherwise.

For shipment abroad, rules regarding VAT are applied for the respective recipient countries.

The Swedish Food Agency reserves the right to cancel participation and orders to customers with outstanding invoices.

For customers in Sweden

Payment to the Swedish Food Agency can be made to bankgiro 5202-3926.

For customers outside Sweden

Bank details for payment to the Swedish Food Agency	
Account holder details	
Name of Account holder	Livsmedelsverket (Swedish Food Agency)
Address	P.O. Box 622
Post code	SE-75126
City	Uppsala
Country	Sweden
Telephone	+46 18 17 55 00
E-mail	livsmedelsverket@slv.se
VAT number	SE202100185001
Bank details	
Bank name	Danske Bank A/S, Sverige filial
Post code	SE-10392
City	Stockholm
Country	Sweden
Account no.	12810103798
BIC/SWIFT	DABASESX
IBAN	SE3712000000012810103798

Delivery and invoice address

All invoices to the Swedish Food Agency should be electronic. See the detailed information on the webpage: https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/om-oss/kontakt/kunder-leverantorer

If you're unable to send an electronic invoice, you can use the invoice address below.

Addresses	
Delivery address	
Company name:	Livsmedelsverket (Swedish Food Agency)
Address	Dag Hammarskjölds väg 56 C
Post code	SE-75237
City	Uppsala
Country	Sweden
Telephone	+46 18 17 55 00
E-mail	micro@slv.se
Invoice address	
Bank name	Livsmedelsverket (Swedish Food Agency)
Post code	SE-83826
City	Frösön
Country	Sweden
Telephone	+46 18 17 55 00
E-mail	micro@slv.se

Biology department

Proficiency testing

Where can I find old PT reports?

Previous PT reports are available here: www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/PT-micro

Do you offer PT with matrix?

No. Our PT only contains samples with freeze-dried microorganisms.

When do I receive instructions for sample preparation and analysis?

The instructions are sent via e-mail at the same time as the samples are shipped. The instructions are sent to the contact person(s) you have registered in our database.

Do we need to perform all analyses in the PT round?

No, you only need to perform and report the analysis of your choice.

Which methods can I use?

You can use any appropriate method as long as the method is suitable for the target organism. In general, we recommend that you use the same method as you use for your normal analyses.

For Food, most participants use pour/spread plating methods, MPN methods, PCR methods, rapid methods (e.g. Petrifilm™ and TEMPO®). For Drinking water, most participants follow ISO and EN methods used within the European Union, or other methods based on equivalent principles (membrane filtration, pour plate technique, rapid methods etc.)

Please be aware that not all methods may be suitable for all target organisms.

PCR methods

For PCR methods, please check with us beforehand, to ensure that the target gene of your PCR method is present in our target organisms.

- Our *Escherichia coli* O157 contains the gene *eae*, but no *stx* genes.
- Our *Yersinia enterocolitica* contains the gene *ail*.

Can I report results for more than one method?

No, not at the moment. But it is a feature that we're working on implementing.

I cannot report results on the website. What do I do?

1. Check your internet connection and try with a different browser.
2. Double-check your user login and password.
3. Request a new password from us (micro@slv.se).
4. Send your results directly via e-mail (micro@slv.se).

I'm not certain of my results. Should I report them?

If you would have reported the results to a customer, you should report them also in the PT.

I'm not certain of my results, can I get new samples and repeat the analysis before reporting?

No, but you can order follow-up samples after the preliminary report has been published.

https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/PT-extra

Can I report qualitative results in a quantitative analysis?

No. If you analyse e.g. Enterobacteriaceae, but are unsure about the exact concentration, you can technically report this as "larger than", e.g. >1, to signify that you have detected Enterobacteriaceae. Results "larger than" will however not be evaluated.

I reported the wrong results? What do I do?

If the reporting deadline hasn't passed, simply login and report your results again. Results can be entered, checked and changed through the website until the last date for reporting results.

If the reporting deadline has passed, you're no longer able to change your results. With a few exceptions, incorrectly reported results are not corrected, but are considered part of the PT. Incorrectly reported results may however be excluded from the statistical evaluation, so that they won't impact the other participants' results.

I didn't receive a confirmation that my results were submitted. What do I do?

Entering a wrong e-mail address is often shown to be the cause for not receiving a confirmation e-mail. So if you do not get an e-mail, open the form a second time, correct your e-mail address and submit the results again. Multiple e-mail addresses should be separated with a semi-colon (;).

You can also send your results directly via e-mail (micro@slv.se).

The reporting deadline has passed, can I still report results?

As a general rule, no. Reporting in time is considered a part of the PT, and our staff also begins evaluating the results directly after the reporting deadline.

Results reported by participants after the deadline, are generally only included in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when there are problems with the reporting webpage).

After the publication of the preliminary report, no changes will be made to the reported results, and no new results will be accepted.

Can I order follow-up samples?

Yes, after the publication of the preliminary report. Each participant can then order one extra vial of each sample in the PT, free of charge. (As long as there are vials left in stock.) Such follow-up samples can be ordered at our webpage:

www.livsmedelsverket.se/en/PT-extra

Additional follow-up samples can be purchased for the same price as an RM.

What is the difference between the preliminary and the final report?

The preliminary report is published 1–2 weeks after the reporting deadline, after a quick statistical evaluation of the reported results, as an assistance to the participants. The acceptance limits in the preliminary report are usually very similar, or identical, to those in the final report.

Prior to the publication of the final report, we do a more thorough analysis of the participants' results, including comparison of different methods, and taking in consideration feedback from the participants

based on the preliminary report. This more comprehensive report is published latest 2 months after the reporting deadline.

Reference materials

Are your reference materials certified (CRM)?

The RM manufactured by the Swedish Food Agency are not CRM.

The Swedish Food Agency is accredited by Swedac (the accreditation agency in Sweden) for all of the analyses that are included in our RM (SS-EN ISO 17025 accreditation). We're also accredited for organising PT (SS-EN ISO 17043 accreditation). This latter accreditation includes in-house manufacture and quality control of the PT samples. Our RM are manufactured and controlled in the exact same way as our PT samples. To a large extent, our RM are manufactured in accordance also with the ISO standard for CRM (ISO 17034), but without the accreditation.

My results are outside the limits provided in the instructions for the RM. What is wrong?

From time to time, laboratories contact us regarding lower than expected yield in our reference materials. Such questions have e.g. been reported for analyses that include Gram-negative target organisms (e.g. analysis of Enterobacteriaceae, coliform bacteria and *E. coli*). But results from other analyses are sometimes also reported as being unexpectedly low. In general, the following information could be of assistance if you receive unexpectedly low (or high) results:

- The mean values and preliminary acceptance limits in our RM are based on analysis with ISO and NMKL methods. Other methods may not necessarily always give results within the same intervals.
- We always recommend that you use laboratory-specific control charts, with laboratory-specific control intervals. This is especially if you routinely obtain results that deviate from the mean values and initial control limits in the instructions for our RM.
- Our RM are routinely analysed at the Swedish Food Agency for homogeneity. Should the results in these routine test indicate inhomogeneity between vials – or that the concentrations deviate more than $\pm 2s_0$ (as provided in the instructions) – we will send out an e-mail with information to all laboratories that have purchased the affected RM.

Specifically for Gram-negative microorganisms:

- Gram-negative microorganisms in our samples are in general more sensitive e.g. to storage at room temperature, exposure to light, and to being suspended in diluent for an extended period of time.
- Low results for Gram-negative microorganisms are often associated with e.g. wrong pH in the media and a longer-than-necessary time between sample preparation and analysis.
- Internal testing at the Swedish Food Agency have indicated that results for Gram-negative bacteria can vary up to 0.1 $\log_{10}$ cfu/ml between similar media from different manufacturers.

Complaints, suggestions for improvement and other comments

We're very happy to hear about any comments you have regarding our PT and RM, and encourage you to send them to us at micro@slv.se.

Supplier assessments

The Swedish Food Agency has no responsibility to fill out questionnaires, supplier assessments or similar documents provided by customers, but may nevertheless choose to do so at our discretion. Limited – and often-asked-for – general information about the Swedish Food Agency as a service provider is available in this document.

Summarized information about the Swedish Food Agency as a supplier	
Company information	
Company name	Swedish Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket)
Address	P.O. Box 622
Post code	SE-75126
City	Uppsala
Country	Sweden
Telephone	+46 18 17 55 00
E-mail	livsmedelsverket@slv.se
Type of organisation	Government agency
Number of employees	630 (approximately)
Organisation number	202100-1850
Economy	
Payment terms	30 days
VAT number	SE202100185001
F tax certificate	Yes
Budget	Income: 713,400,000 SEK (2023) Expenses: 740,100,000 SEK (2023) Annual turnover: 664,400,000 SEK (2022)
Liability insurance	The Swedish Food Agency has a liability insurance for up to 10,000,000 SEK (2022).
Accreditation	
SS-EN ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation	Yes
SS-EN ISO/IEC 17043 accreditation	Yes
SS-EN ISO 17034 accreditation	No, but see above under “Reference materials”
SS-EN ISO 9001 accreditation	No.
Environmental	
SS-EN ISO 14001 accreditation	No. As a government agency we follow the relevant authority regulations (notably *Myndighetsförordning (2007:515)* and *Förordning 2009:1426*), which include that the Swedish Food Agency is obligated to follow Sweden’s national environmental goals.
Do you have documented environmental goals?	Yes
Do you have an environmental officer? (*swedish: miljöansvarig*)?	Yes
Do you have routines to for reducing energy consumption?	Energy usage is followed up yearly in the Swedish Food Agency’s environmental reporting (*Swedish: miljörapport*).
Working environment	

SS-EN ISO 45001 accreditation	No
OHSAS 18001 accreditation	No
Do you have a working environment policy?	Yes
Do you have a policy against discriminatory treatment and harassment?	Yes

The principle of public access to information

The Swedish Food Agency is a government agency. This means that all communication to us is considered to be public documents. Public documents may be handed out to the public according to the principle of publicity.

Exceptions to this are made for confidential information. This includes customer/participant login information and PT results, which will always be kept confidential (unless given permission to share them with a third party by the customer).

More information:

https://www.regeringen.se/informationsmaterial/2009/09/public-access-to-information-and-secrecy-act/