



Quality Sampling Techniques - Skin Samples



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Taking Quality Samples – Sheet 3 – Skin/Hair Examination

The following information regarding sampling techniques enables us to give you the most accurate result for animals with skin and abscess conditions.

Skin scrapes

A sterile scalpel blade should be scraped across the skin until oozing of the wound occurs. The blade should be held perpendicular to the skin and the average area to be scraped should be 6 to 8cm. The depth of the scrape depends upon the location and typical location of the parasite in question. When scraping for tunnel living parasites e.g. *Demodex species*, a deep skin scrape to the level of slight capillary bleeding should be taken. For surface dwelling mites e.g. *Cheyletiella* or *Chorioptes sp.*, the skin is scraped superficially to collect scales and crusts.

The use of oil hinders microscopic examination and should preferably not be used or be used as sparingly as possible. Samples should be submitted in a sterile container (such as a universal) and the used blade should be included. This is used for microscopic examination and microbiology.

Plucked hairs

The area to be examined should be cleaned gently with an alcohol wipe to help exclude saprophytic fungi and the hairs should be plucked from the edge of the lesion. Hairs should be plucked in the direction of hair growth and individual hairs, including the root, should be sampled. The plucked hairs should be submitted in a sterile universal container or envelope (not a plastic bag).

These are used for microscopic examination and culture for *Dermatophytes*.

Swabs for microbiology

A swab in transport medium should be used. This can be cultured for micro-organisms and *Malassezia* (if relevant). If abscesses are to be examined, the skin should be wiped with an alcohol wipe and allowed to dry and some of the contents expelled onto a sterile swab.

Punch biopsies may be sent for culture. These should be submitted dry or in sterile saline – NOT FORMALIN.

Sellotape

The use of sellotape impressions is not beneficial, a scrape or pluck is far more useful.

CTDS Test requirements

<i>Dermatology / Skin</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Sample Requirements</i>
Dermatophyte (fungal) culture	D2	Plucked hairs
Scrape + fungal Culture	D3	Skin scrape and plucked hairs
Scrape + fungal Culture + bacteriology*	D4	Skin scrape, plucked hairs and swab
Skin scrape (microscopy)	D1	Skin scrape

* culture includes identification and sensitivity of microorganisms.

