CHESTER ZOO ENDOCRINE LABORATORY- FAECAL COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Proper Identification
• The most important requirement for any sample collection protocol is that you know which animal the sample came from.
• The best approach is to separate animals at night to properly identify faecal samples.
• Otherwise you must observe the animal defecating and collect the sample as soon as possible.
• It is also possible to mark the faecal samples by feeding a marker (i.e. food colouring)

Frequency of Collection
• The second most important requirement is you are able to collect samples with a frequency that will provide useful and meaningful data.
• The frequency of sample collection is species dependant and is also dependent on the question you would like to answer.
• Please contact us and we can help you determine what frequency you should be collecting samples

Contamination
Things to be careful of:
• The faeces are not contaminated with urine
  (Urine has hormones too and this interferes with measurements of faecal hormone concentrations)
• The faeces are not contaminated with another individuals sample (faeces or urine)
• Try to collect samples as soon as possible. (hormone concentrations in samples left exposed to environment for extended periods will increase the risk of incorrect values)

Collection
• Once you have properly identified the sample, collect sample into zip-lock baggies
• Do not collect the entire faecal sample. Instead collect several (3-4) ‘sub’ samples from the same faecal sample (as ‘pockets’ of hormone concentrations can be found in the faecal sample).
• Sample size equal to a handful/fist size is adequate.
• Try to minimize the amount of debris (hair/bones/hay) you collect, obviously the more faecal material present the better
• Label the bag using a waterproof permanent maker (i.e. Sharpie® pen) with:
  Animal’s Name
  Species
  Date (day/month/year)

Storage
• Store sample ASAP in freezer at -20°C
  (Hormones concentrations will degrade if samples are left out too long)

For more information please contact:
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