CHESTER ZOO ENDOCRINE LABORATORY- FAECAL COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Proper Identification

- The most important requirement for any sample collection protocol is that 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^{0}C
  (Hormones concentrations will degrade if samples are left out too long)

For more information please contact:
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