

Best Practice Sample Submission

Cheek Swabs for EIC testing

Sample collection

Types of swabs accepted

- The VDL does not provide cheek swab collection kits. You may purchase appropriate cheek swabs (also called Sterile Applicators) at certain pharmacies, especially specialty pharmacies and medical supply stores that carry home health care products. You may also order them online from a variety of vendors, such as:

www.amazon.com

www.ezswabs.com

www.shoplet.com

www.walgreens.com

Regardless of how they are obtained, all Cheek Swabs used for EIC MUST:

- **Be STERILE** - cotton, polyester or foam tipped applicators.
- **Be individually wrapped** or have TWO sterile swabs per package, and the package must be intact and unopened.
- **Have a plastic or wooden handle** that is at least 6 inches long. Shorter (3 inch) swabs are NOT acceptable. Q-Tip type all purpose swabs are NOT acceptable, but Q-Tip brand cotton applicators are okay.
- **Be DRY.** Swabs with transport medium are NOT acceptable.

The VDL reserves the right to reject unacceptable swabs and packaging of samples.

Preparation Prior to Collection

- Please note: cheek swabs are NOT ACCEPTED for unweaned puppies. Puppies MUST be weaned for at least 24 hours before swabbing.
- The dog to be sampled should not eat or drink for at least one hour prior to having the sample collected. This is to reduce the chance of contamination.

- The dog should be isolated from other dogs, toys, rawhides, and other possible sources of oral contamination for at least one hour prior to sampling. This is to reduce the chance of dog to dog contamination.
- Just prior to sampling, check the dog's mouth to see that no food or other material is obviously present. If there is, clean/rinse the dog's mouth to remove it.
- The person taking the samples should avoid touching the inside of the dog's mouth. Disposable latex gloves will help reduce contamination by the handler.
- If more than one dog is being sampled, the person doing the collections must wash hands or change gloves between collections.
- Never allow the sterile swab to touch anything except the inside of the dog's mouth or the inside of the package that it came in. Especially never allow contact between swabs from different dogs.
- Prepare a clean surface on which to place the opened swab package while you are swabbing the dog.

Collection Instructions

- Use TWO swabs per dog.
- Label the swab packets with the dog's call name, the owner's last name, permanent identification or registration number (if applicable) and collection date.
- Label a standard paper (letter size) envelope with the same information as in #2.
- Open the swab package at the handle end (NOT the collection tip end) and carefully peel the package away to within about an inch of the end. Remove the first swab. Do not touch the collection tip of the swab.
- Do not allow the tip of the swab to touch anything other than the inside of the dog's mouth and the inside of the packaging.
- While holding the handle end of the swab, insert the tip along the inside of the cheek. Rotate the collection tip along the inside of the cheek for 20 seconds. Push the outside of the dog's cheek while rotating the swab and firmly press the swab between the gum and cheek to enhance cell collection.
- Hold the swab while it dries for 10 seconds. Do NOT blow on the swab.
- Reinsert the tip of the swab into the closed end of the package and remove the second swab. If your swabs came in plastic containers, put the swab directly into the labeled paper envelope you have prepared. DO NOT use the plastic container.
- Repeat the above steps on the other cheek with the remaining swab (i.e. 2 swabs/dog).
- Place the packaged swabs in the labeled paper envelope (NOT a plastic bag). Do NOT put the submission form in the envelope with the swabs.

- Send the sample and completed submission form following the packaging instructions below.

Packing and Shipping

It is recommended that you request a tracking number for your submission package with your shipping company of choice.

A major concern in using cheek swabs is the possibility of microbial growth on the swab after the sample has been collected. This is particularly a problem during hot and humid times of the year. To reduce the chance for contamination:

- Do not store the swabs (used or unused) in sealed plastic bags.
- Do not freeze them or store them in the refrigerator where condensation can more easily occur. Ice packs should NOT be used for shipping cheek swab samples.
- Be prepared to ship the cheek swab sample as soon as possible after it is collected.

Place the air-dried swabs in a labeled, clean paper envelope. Do NOT put the submission form in the envelope with the swabs. Place the labeled envelope and the submission form into a second, sturdy mailing envelope and write "Do Not Bend" on the outside.