

FEL_020 Feline Conscious Restraint for Oropharyngeal & Conjunctival Swabbing

I. OBJECTIVE

To describe the safe and humane way to gently restrain felines for conscious oropharyngeal and conjunctival swabbing.

II. COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Carefully monitor the cat's demeanour to avoid personal injuries (e.g. such as cat scratches, bites, needle stick injuries).
- This procedure should not take longer than 5 minutes per animal in total.
- The diagnostic quality of the samples collected may be impacted if contaminated with fluorescein stain, eye ointments, or other ocular/ nasopharyngeal medications recently applied to the animal.
- If collecting epithelial cells, diagnostic quality of samples may also be impacted if there are large amounts of ocular or nasopharyngeal discharge at the sample site.
- Store swabs as per specific laboratory instructions until they can be sent to the laboratory.

III. EQUIPMENT

- Dry, sterile cotton swabs (preferably those with a flexible plastic shaft)
- Individual, sterile sample transport containers (containing an appropriate transport media for the swab)
- Clean, dry towel for restraint
- Clean, dry surface (table or floor)
- Feliway spray (if available)

IV. PROCEDURE

1. Prepare area to ensure that there is a rubber mat or towel in between the cat and table or floor of the enclosure. Preparation should include spraying the towel with Feliway, if available.
2. Ensure all your equipment is ready to go, and that the sampling area is secure.
3. The handler should safely remove the cat from the cage or condo. Ensure you are using correct handling techniques.
4. The handler should gently place the cat on the table or floor.
5. To start have the cat strategically placed in the centre of the towel and ensure that there is roughly 10cm of towel in front of the cat.
6. The cat can be standing, sitting or laying down.
7. The handler should keep one hand on the cat while picking up the towel at the front of the cat. Bring the towel back enclosing the front limbs and wrap around the cat's neck. Allow for one to two finger tightness between the cat's neck and towel.
8. While holding the towel around neck, the handler uses the other hand to wrap towel firmly around the cat's body, ensuring all limbs have been included. Tuck the edges in under the cat. Then wrap the other side and again tuck edges in under the cat.
9. Check the tightness of the towel wrap and fix any issues up.

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10. Restrain the cats head by the handler placing a thumb at the base of the cat's ear or skull on one side and fingers at the base of the cat's ear or skull on the other. Ensure fingers are not wrapped around the cat's throat or in the way of the person swabbing.
11. The handler should restrain the cat's forelimbs below the elbow (between radius and ulna).
12. The cat is restrained between handlers' body and forearm.
13. The person collecting the swabs then obtains the conjunctival and pharyngeal swabs:
 - a. conjunctival samples - reflect the eyelid with one hand, then use the other hand to gently roll a sterile dry swab across the ventral conjunctival fornix of one, or both eyes. .
 - b. pharyngeal samples - gently tilt the face upwards and open the mouth with one hand, then with the other hand insert and then gently roll a sterile dry swab across the desired laryngopharyngeal area.
Generally collecting samples from multiple sites increases test sensitivity, however, if only a single sit can be collected, dependent on the sampling purpose, a pharyngeal swab is usually preferred.
14. The swabs should be placed into individual sterile sample transport containers. Swab stems can be shortened using sterile scissors (if required to fit within the containers).
15. Label the containers and store them as per specific laboratory instructions prior to sending to the laboratory for testing.
Generally, for short term storage, samples require standard refrigeration (0-4°C).

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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