



Collecting Oiled Wildlife Evidence

There are two pieces of important evidence to be collected when an oiled animal arrives at a Primary Care Facility, a photograph and an oiled feather or fur sample. Evidence samples should **not** be collected by stabilization organizations where the animal will be transferred to a primary care facility for the complete rehabilitation process. This avoids putting the animal through unnecessary duplicate sampling. Below are detailed instructions on collecting and storing both pieces of evidence for birds and mammals.

Photographic Evidence:

1. Use a digital camera to photograph the oiled animal. Once a picture has been taken it must remain on the memory card and cannot be modified in any way (this includes downloading images from the card to a computer).
2. Each photograph should clearly depict the following:
 - a. Birds - the entire body oriented in such a way as to provide the best view of the oiled area(s);
 - b. Mammals - the entire body oriented in such a way as to provide the best view of the oiled area(s); or if the animal is too large to easily photograph, an image that clearly illustrates the area oiled and an identifying tag or other device.
 - c. Birds and mammals - a dry erase board listing the following information:
Spill Name, Date, Time, Species, Intake Log Number, and Animal Identification
3. When the memory card is full, remove it from the camera, place it in an envelope labeled with the spill name and the range of log numbers for the animals imaged on the card. Secure the card under lock and key until it is collected by officials from the Office of Spill Prevention and Response or the Oiled Wildlife Care Network.

**A digital camera and memory card will be provided by the OWCN to all primary care facilities.*

Feather Sample Collection Technique for Oiled Birds

1. Using a pair of hemostats that have been cleaned with isopropyl alcohol remove a **minimum of 5** heavily oiled contour feathers. Feathers should not be taken from one location as this may negatively affect waterproofing. Remove the feathers by pulling in the direction of feather growth. The Petroleum Chemistry Laboratory requires 5 completely oiled covert feathers (~100 mg of oil) to properly analyze the sample. If the feathers are oiled at a surface or moderate depth, more feathers must be collected to have enough product for fingerprinting.
2. Place the sampled feathers on a piece of aluminum foil taking care not to touch them against any other surface. **Note:** Do not allow nitrile or vinyl gloves to touch any part of the oil sample.
3. Fold the foil over the feathers, sealing them inside.
4. Provide the following information on an evidence label or piece of masking tape: ***Spill Name, Date, Species, Intake Log Number, Capture Location, and Animal Identification.*** We recommend waterproof labels that withstand freezer storage (Avery 5522 weather proof white labels have been tested and proven to withstand the freezing and thawing process).
5. When applying the label, make certain it covers the folded ends of the foil.
6. Place samples in a zip lock bag. Place the zip lock bag inside a standard mailing envelope that has been labeled with the same information that is on the evidence label (see step #4).
7. Store enveloped samples in a locked freezer.

Sample Collection Technique for Oiled Mammals

Sample Collection Technique

1. Scrape visible oil from fur/skin with wooden spatula (tongue depressor).
2. Place oil covered spatula in solvent-rinsed glass jar with a Teflon-lined lid (e.g. I-Chem) then break off and discard the remaining un-oiled portion, allowing the lid to close. If an appropriate jar is not available, wrap sample in aluminum foil (dull side to sample).
Note: Avoid touching/contaminating oil sample with your nitrile gloves.
3. Label the glass jar (use waterproof labels) and apply it across the lid of the jar and onto the sides of the glass.
Label must include: Spill Name, Log #, Species, Tag #, Arrival Date, Sampling Date, and Capture Location.
4. Keep sample refrigerated or on ice until it can be stored.
5. Lock sample in a -20°C (or colder) freezer.

Storing and Transporting Evidence from Oiled Animals

The photograph, oil sample, medical records and logs are considered to be legal evidence; therefore it is important that the following procedures are followed closely.

All digital memory cards and oil sample evidence should be stored under lock and key until the OWCN Response Coordinator provides you with further instructions. If an oil sample is sent to the Petroleum Chemistry Laboratory for analysis, a chain of custody form must accompany the sample. A chain of custody form can be printed or downloaded from the OWCN webpage (www.owcn.org).

Once all the records and logs are completed they should be mailed along with a chain of custody form to the OWCN at VM: Wildlife Health Center, One Shields Avenue, Davis CA 95616.

Sampling supplies are available from the OWCN (contact January Bill at 530-979-6099). A Label template can be found on our website: www.owcn.org

For individual oiled animals, follow the same procedures outlined above with a few exceptions, In the place of spill name please label: ***Individual Oiled Bird*** and memory cards for Individual oiled Birds only need to be sent to the OWCN upon request. Evidence doesn't need to be accompanied by a chain of custody for individual oiled bird samples. If you have any questions please contact Dr. Greg Massey (530) 752-1218 or January Bill (530) 979-6099.