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## Technical Summary: Swab and settle plate best practice

### Environmental Monitoring

#### PRE-MOISTENED SWABS:

Label each swab and the sample submission paperwork with identifying details, such as: sampling site description, time and date of sampling and name of sampler. Ensure consistency in the labelling to maintain traceability of samples and enable accurate trending of results over time.

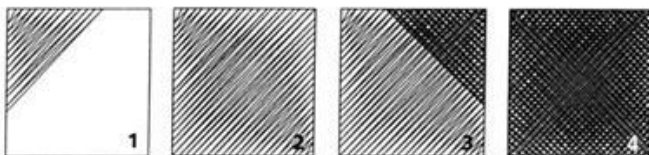
When choosing sites, target potential food hang-up areas e.g. scarred/cracked surfaces, corners, angles, hard to clean equipment (rollers, pipes etc).

Aseptically remove the swab from vial, being careful not to touch any portion that might be inserted into the vial. For environmental swabbing, use a swab that contains a neutralising solution or buffer.

Swab the area to be sampled by holding the swab stick to make a 30° angle contact with the surface.

Rub the swab head slowly and thoroughly over approximately 100cm<sup>2</sup> of surface, reversing direction between strokes, with gentle rotation of the head over the surface to be tested.

Use a cross-hatch technique, as below:



When sampling utensils such as knives, ladles, etc, run the swab slowly and firmly three times over the significant surfaces of the utensils reversing the direction each time.

After the areas have been swabbed, insert the swab into the transport medium or the casing for stick swab.

Replace the cap and transport swabs to the laboratory under refrigerated conditions to be processed within 24 hours.

#### CONTACT PLATES:

Determine positions/areas to be sampled and clearly label the plates accordingly with site description and date of sampling.

Gently remove the lid and aseptically press the agar surface of the contact plate to the flat surface being sampled.

Ensure the entire surface of the plate contacts the surface, using a rolling uniform pressure on the back of the plate.

Do not attempt to “swab” the surface of the plate. Take care to not touch the agar or the inside of the lid.

After sampling of surfaces, plates are recovered and transported to the laboratory for incubation. Plates must be placed in a sterile sealed plastic bag, taped tightly and closed to prevent the plates from moving during transportation.

The plates should be transported back to the laboratory in an air-cooled, insulated container to be processed within 24 hours of sampling.

**NOTE:** The plates should not be in direct contact with ice-bricks or ice blocks.

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#### **AIR SETTLE PLATES:**

Determine positions/areas to be sampled and clearly label the plates accordingly with site description, date of sampling and exposure time as required.

The plates should be labelled on the bottom and not the lid, to ensure chain of custody.

Set out plates in designated positions/areas. Take care to not touch the agar or the inside of the lid.

Plates are left opened with the agar exposed and the lid facing downward during the collection period.

Exposure time is set for 15 minutes or up to 60 minutes maximum, depending on the activity levels at the sampling point (15 minutes for high activity, 60 minutes for low).

After exposure, plates are recovered and transported to the laboratory for incubation. Plates must be placed in a sterile sealed plastic bag, taped tightly and closed to prevent the plates from moving during transportation.

An unexposed control plate should also be clearly marked "Control" and submitted with the sampled plates.

The plates should be transported back to the laboratory in an air-cooled, insulated container to be processed within 24 hours.

**NOTE:** The plates should not be in direct contact with ice-bricks or ice blocks.

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## **Allergen swabbing**

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#### **DRY ALLERGEN SWABS:**

Label each swab and any relevant paperwork with identifying details, such as: sampling site description, time and date of sampling and name of sampler.

Ensure the swab being used does not contain media in the swab holder and that the swab is the appropriate type for the allergen you wish to detect.

Remove the swab from vial, being careful not to come into contact with the cotton tip. Moisten the cotton tip with allergen free water.

Swab the area to be sampled by holding the swab stick to make a 30° angle contact with the surface.

Rub the swab head slowly and thoroughly over approximately 100cm<sup>2</sup> (10cm x 10cm) of surface, reversing direction between strokes, with gentle rotation of the head over the surface to be tested.

You should use a cross-hatch technique, as above.

When sampling utensils such as knives, ladles, etc, run the swab slowly and firmly three times over the significant surfaces of the utensils reversing the direction each time.

After the areas have been swabbed, insert the swab into the casing for stick swab.

Replace the cap and transport swabs to the laboratory under refrigerated conditions to be processed within seven working days.

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ALS offers support to develop and implement an Environmental Monitoring or Allergen Control program for your facility.

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