



Otter Spraint Collection Project

Thank you for kindly volunteering your help!

What do we want to do?

- To collect and store otter spraint from along the river Wensum

Why are
we
collecting
otter
spraint?

Will
support
3
projects:

Calum is working on a PhD which in part involves the effect of environmental lead on wild otter health

Hanna, a professor, wants to look at the DNA within the spraint to learn more about the parasites in the river

Grace, 3rd year veterinary medicine student, has a vacation research project in March the details of which still need to be worked out



How to collect the otter spraint

- Don't worry about remembering all this now - you will be sent collection packs containing step-by-step instructions on how to collect the spraint
- Sample collection kits will contain:
 - 1 x instruction sheet on how to collect the spraint
 - 1 x datasheet where you will record info about the spraint
 - 1 x pair disposable nitril gloves
 - 1 x pencil
 - 1 x plastic spoon
 - 2 x sample bags, 1 bigger than the other
 - 1 x screw-top collection tube
 - 1 x plastic waste bag

How to collect the otter spraint

1. When you find an otter spraint, open your sample collection kit. Record the following information on the datasheet:
 - a. the date
 - b. your initials
 - c. what3words location
 - d. spraint freshness at time of collection (using the provided reference scale)
2. Put on the nitril gloves and open the screw-top collection tube.
3. Using the plastic spoon, place the spraint in the collection tube. Do not touch the spraint with your gloved hands. Screw the lid onto the collection tube tightly.
4. Place the collection tube into the small sample bag. Seal the sample bag.
5. Place the small sample bag into the larger secondary collection bag. Place the datasheet in there as well. Seal the secondary collection bag.
6. Place the plastic spoon into the disposable waste bag. Remove your gloves and place them in the disposable waste bag as well. Tie the waste bag and dispose of it.
7. Send a text to Grace Roberts on 07972096120, with the message: "Otter spraint sample found, date XX/XX/XX."
8. Return the sample to be stored in the freezer within 24 hours.

Spraint freshness guide



When first produced, spraint is black and moist with a coating of an oily looking slime. This will dry off, leaving a dry piece of "coke". With age the dark colour fades, until the spraint goes grey, and then white, by which time it is just a small pile of fish shrapnel.

Somerset Otter Group. 2022. 'OTTER SIGNS'. <http://www.somersetottergroup.org.uk/94-2/elementor-2862>.

When do we start and how long will we collect spraint for?

- We are aiming to get the sample collection kits to you before the end of January. Spraint collection could then begin as soon as you receive the kits.
- We are hoping to collect ~30 samples.
- We would expect to stop collecting samples around mid-March.

What next?

- Either Calum or myself will drive over to bring you the collection kits sometime in the coming weeks – we can email to set a date?
- Either Calum or myself will drive to you again before early March to collect the samples.
- We may ask that some of the samples instead of being placed in the freezer are refrigerated and then sent to us via post. We will email to let you know if we decide to ask for this. We would provide the postage materials.