

DIRECT SMEAR:

Direct fecal smears are most useful for the diagnosis of protozoal parasites which have motile trophozoite stages that are passed in the feces. Cysts and oocysts of coccidia and *Giardia* sp. can be seen on direct smears; however, these non-motile stages are more likely to be recovered when concentrated using a flotation technique.

In order to be diagnostic, direct smears **MUST** be performed using fresh feces. Fresh feces means **BODY TEMPERATURE** (usually less than five or ten minutes old!). As the specimen cools, trophozoites lose their motility and their diagnostic features become less recognizable. In preparing the smear, use saline. Water will rupture some trophozoites, rendering them unrecognizable.

Indications: Motile protozoa trophozoites (feces must be body temperature).

Limitations: Small sample size (sample size is so small that if you see nothing, it may not mean that the animal has no parasites; it just means there aren't enough to show up in a direct smear).