



## Australian Museum guidelines for external researchers making loan requests for samples for genetic studies from tissues and specimens in the terrestrial vertebrate collections.

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### PURPOSE AND TERMINOLOGY

- The Australian Museum (and most other museums around Australia) sees the role of its research collections as the basis upon which to increase our understanding of the natural environment.
- The Australian Museum holds an extensive collection of Terrestrial Vertebrate specimens and genetic samples which has been developed and maintained to facilitate scientific research at the Australian Museum now and into the future.
- The Australian Museum will, under the conditions outlined below, give consideration to providing researchers external to the Museum with genetic samples from its collections to supplement, support and enhance an existing or proposed sampling program to be used in external projects. It is not the intention of the Museum to provide all of the material for research projects outside of the Australian Museum's research program, and there should be no presumption that the Museum will make any or all of its material of interest available for any particular research project.
- For the purposes of the guidelines given below samples extracted from the tissue collections and the specimen collections for genetic studies are regarded as 'genetic material', and sampling from these collections for genetic studies is regarded as destructive sampling and is subject to the Australian Museum Collection Maintenance Policy 2013 Section 9.1 (<http://australianmuseum.net.au/document/Collections-Maintenance-Policy-2013>).
- Provision of genetic material regarded as a loan is subject to the conditions of return as outlined on the Terrestrial Vertebrate Genetic Sample License Agreement.

### REQUEST PROCEDURE

- External researchers (including students and established researchers) intending to request genetic material from the Australian Museum (AM) should negotiate with the relevant AM Collection Manager concerning the availability and number of samples that the Museum can make available as a contribution towards their research **before committing to a project**. This process should be done via email to [tissue@austrmus.gov.au](mailto:tissue@austrmus.gov.au) so your enquiry can be directed to the appropriate AM collection manager, and should include a clear outline of the research and its objectives, the institution it is being conducted through and the names of any associated collaborators or supervisors.
- Researchers intending to make requests for samples for grant-funded projects should contact [tissue@austrmus.gov.au](mailto:tissue@austrmus.gov.au) regarding potential cost recovery for providing samples before submitting a grant application and incorporate these costs into their applications.
- Requests from students, honoraries and post-doctoral fellows must be signed by a member of staff of the recipient institution. This staff member will be responsible for, and abide by the provisions of any subsequent loan that eventuates.
- Samples of genetic material for loan requests will be made available only if the specimens have been registered in the AM collections database. Material held by the Museum that has not yet been registered in the database will not be loaned.
- Before making requests for destructive sampling for genetic material from the specimen collections, students and researchers should be aware that :

- There needs to be a demonstrated track record by the researcher or student's supervisor of successfully extracting useful DNA from dry and/or old specimens.
- To the best of their knowledge, the research must not overlap or duplicate other research work.
- The research must add something significant to the understanding of the taxa in question or the issue being studied.
- The results must be published and available for others to view.

### **APPROVAL**

- Provision of genetic material for loan from the AM tissue and specimen collections requires the submission and approval of a signed 'Terrestrial Vertebrate Genetic Sample Licence Agreement'. The licence agreement form will be provided to the researcher for signing once the loan request has been assessed. Note that due to high levels of demand, and the irreplaceable nature of some of the genetic material, it is anticipated that it will not be possible to fulfil all requests. Requests for the loan of genetic material will be assessed on a case by case basis, with due regard to staffing capacity at the time, the value of the specimens and the strength of the proposed research activities.
- A condition of the Terrestrial Vertebrate Genetic Sample Licence Agreement is that any unused genetic material (unless gifted) must be returned to the AM.

### **LOAN PREPARATION**

- The storage and transfer of tissue samples involves issues relating to strict security requirements, potential cross-contamination, DAFF/AQIS premises accreditation and quality control that must be complied with under the terms of the NATA accreditation of the DNA Lab and Frozen Tissue Collection. For loan requests of genetic material from the tissue collection **only Museum technical staff can sub-sample from the tissue collection**. This will be done within the constraints of available resources.
- The preparation of a loan of genetic samples from the terrestrial vertebrate specimen and tissue collections **specifically for genetic research** requires an additional investment of time and resources by collection management staff. For this reason, the AM reserves the right **to recover the costs of making the loan**, including direct costs such as materials and transport costs, as well as staff time for tasks such as administration and curatorial functions. Any potential charges will be discussed with the requesting researcher prior to the approval of the loan request.
- For loan requests of genetic material from the specimen collections that require destructive sampling **only Museum collections staff are permitted to prepare samples**. This will be done within the constraints of the resources available.

### **BENEFIT TO THE MUSEUM**

- The provision of samples of genetic material for an external non-collaborative research project should return some benefit to the Museum as:
  - Deposition in the AM of relevant voucher material from projects.
  - Collaboration on projects with interested AM researchers.
  - Exchange of genetic samples of interest to the AM.
  - Provision of funds to enhance related research and collection management within the AM.
- Where possible, the genetic samples provided by the AM will be cited and acknowledged in resulting publications from the research, including AM registration numbers.
- The resulting genetic sequences from the research should be deposited on GenBank with the AM's registration number included in the record.