



## **National Polecat Survey 2024-2025** **Instructions for collecting and posting polecat samples**

Thank you for collecting polecat hair and whisker samples as part of VWT's National Polecat Survey 2024-2025. The survey is undertaken once every 10 years to gain current information of polecat in Britain and map the recolonisation of the species' former range. Collected hair and whisker samples will be used in future genetic and dietary analyses; we can gather genetic information from hairs, and information about diet from whiskers.

This document contains all you need to know about collecting and posting hair and whisker samples. You can request for us to send you a sample pack, or you can use new resealable plastic bags/envelopes you may have at home.

### **What you will need**

- A dead polecat
- It is recommended you wear disposable gloves
- 2x new resealable plastic bags or paper envelopes to put samples in (one for hairs and one for whiskers)
- A larger stamped envelope to post the samples to VWT in
- A camera or phone to take photographs of the animal

### **Protocol for collecting hair and whisker samples**

1. Only collect samples from deceased animals. We recommend wearing disposable gloves where available.
2. *Hairs*: Pluck a chunk of hairs **with the roots intact** from the back, tail or hind legs. Aim for ~20 hairs. You should be able to do this by hand by pulling firmly.
3. Place hairs into a clean sealable plastic bag or paper envelope.
4. *Whiskers*: Choose the longest whiskers from the muzzle area. Pluck (a minimum of) two whiskers **with the roots intact**. Again, this should be possible by pulling firmly. If plucking is not possible, use scissors to cut the whiskers **as close to the base** of the skin as possible.
5. Place whiskers into a (separate) clean resealable plastic bag or paper envelope.
6. Keep whisker and hair samples in **separate envelopes/bags**.
7. Dispose of gloves and wash or sanitise your hands.
8. Take photographs of the animal. Aim to record a close-up of the animal's face (from front and side angles), and its coat and feet from different angles.
9. Please label the sample envelopes/bags with your name, date of collection, location.
10. Important information to record for each animal – please fill in this information on the Sample Collection Form provided (available online [HERE](#)). The online form is also accessible via QR code on the next page.
  - Sample ID number
  - Date of collection
  - Location (coordinates/grid reference/What3Words and nearest postcode)
  - Age (juvenile or adult) and gender if possible
  - Your name and contact details
11. Samples can be kept at room temperature.
12. Place the sample bags together in an envelope and post to Katherine Morley at the address at the top of this page. Or using the pre-paid and addressed envelope provided by us.
13. Send the photographs to Katherine at [enquiries@vwt.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vwt.org.uk)

*Thank you!*

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You can access the online Sample Collection Form it by scanning the QR code below with your mobile phone's camera.

Simply open the camera on your mobile phone, point at the QR code below, and tap the link that appears on the screen.

