

**More  
Biopsies**

**No  
Scrubbing!**

**More  
Info**



**A Candid Conversation with Dr. Karen Carlton!**



**How many skin biopsies should be submitted?** Please send us **SEVERAL** 4-6mm skin punch biopsies if possible, not just one! As a general rule, it is best to give us at least a few from the periphery of the lesion, and one from the middle if it is a late enough lesion. If the pet has several lesions, it's always better to sample **EARLY** lesions, as they offer the highest diagnostic specificity. The histology cost for up to five biopsies is the same as a single skin biopsy if it is all from the same pathological skin process and there is so much more information to gain.

**The text box for online submissions is limiting. What can we do?** It is true the text box for online submissions doesn't allow for much to be typed in.

**So my recommendations are:**

- Resist any urge to write "Chronic Skin disease" as the sole history as this is frankly useless.
- Please tell us what therapies have already been tried and the results. This especially applies to corticosteroids such as oral steroids within 7-10 days or long acting injectables within the last 4-6 weeks. Specific topical steroids should also be noted to be complete.
- Please always include any travel history or if the patient is a rescue.
- Please email us or include more handwritten history and our front staff will make sure our pathologists receive it with the submission. [labinfo@truenorthvet.ca](mailto:labinfo@truenorthvet.ca)



**Can photographs make a difference? Yes!** A picture is really worth 1000 words particularly if you are suspecting an immune mediated process. Feel free to email us or print out some pictures to include with your submission.  
[labinfo@truenorthvet.ca](mailto:labinfo@truenorthvet.ca)



**What gets you excited when looking down the scope? CRUSTS! DO NOT SCRUB BEFORE SAMPLING!** Pathologists love crusts.

**Should we label where each biopsy is from?** If you think it is important that the pathologist know which biopsy comes from which exact location, they must be placed in separate bottles or identified by suture or some other surefire method. (Note this also applies to multiple mass submissions).



**Any other tips or closing comments? Yes** - let's set up the correct expectations. Any chronic, heavily treated inflammatory skin disease is very unlikely to have specific histological lesions. **Which cases am I talking about?** The chronically itchy, allergic skin disease dog with lichenification, hyperpigmentation, and traumatized skin. The more chronic the skin disease, the less specific are the histologic markers. Be prepared that these cases are likely to receive a diagnosis of chronic hyperplastic non-specific dermatitis. Again, sampling the most acute and active lesions is best. Make sure your owners understand the goal of the biopsies in these longer standing cases is in part to importantly rule in/out a contributing neoplastic process.



Dr. Shelagh Copeland offers this valuable [link](#) to common dermatologic diseases in canine, feline, equine, bovine and exotic patients. Check it out!