

MORE ABOUT MOLD TESTING

With an almost infinite combination of what you can sample (live spores, dead spores, fragments), where you can sample (air, dust, surfaces), how you can sample (bulk, tape, swab, etc), how you can culture, how you can analyze, and more, without a highly skilled practitioner to develop an adequate sampling plan, you are likely to get misleading, confusing, and useless results.

First, there are many different many methods of sampling and lab analysis.

There are sampling methods for air, surface, dust, and bulk. Each type of sample will give you different results with different units of measure and the results of one cannot be directly compared to another. It all depends on what the sample collects, what the lab can detect, and how the results are reported.

Second, several of the same sample types can be analyzed with more than one method, each giving different results. One method will identify only the spores that can grow, while another will see all spores whether they can grow or not, with numbers that can be as much as 50 to 100 times higher. Yet another method of sampling will report all spores whether viable or not, plus fragments of spore and other parts of the mold colony. These fragments are of the same (or greater) concern as viable spores but the other kinds of analysis cannot detect them. Those results can be as much as 1000 times higher!

Third, there are many aspects of mold that you can test. You can test live spores, dead spores, or both plus all the tiny fragments. You can test what is in the air, on surfaces, or in dust. On top of this, you can add in a number of different analytical methods. The combinations are numerous and you need to choose what will give you the most accurate representation of your situation.

Fourth, there must be a match between the sample, the analysis, and the reason for the test. For example, when a doctor needs identification of a particular species to complete her medical diagnosis, that criteria will define the specific type of sample and the appropriate method of analysis. Or, sometimes there is a need to determine the spread of mold contamination throughout a house. Some methods are appropriate for this and others aren't, depending on what kind of mold contamination is suspected.

However, there may be specific situations where testing may be appropriate. If that is the case, hire a qualified professional who can provide correctly determine the sampling method(s), the appropriate lab analysis, and provide an accurate interpretation of results. A professional will look at all of the factors that contribute to mold including: dampness, occupant and building history, building type, materials, leaks, condensation, psychrometry, and another half dozen factors.

This will provide you with the best chance of answering questions concerning mold location, type, and remediation play (beyond just wiping away the visible mold).