

Diagnostic keys for microfilariae (in skin or blood after staining)

	Question/Answers	Go to	Parasite
1	Where the sample was taken from?		
1a	Skin (multiple skin snips preferred; without blood contamination!)	2	
1b	Blood sample: Thick smear	3	
2	How does the posterior end of the microfilaria look like? (Use oil immersion and make sure - by clearly seeing nuclei - that the "worm" is not an artefact)		
2a	Nuclei extend to the tip of the posterior end in the unsheathed thin microfilaria. In most cases the tip of the tail has the aspect of a Shepard's crook		Mansonella streptocerca
2b	The tip of the posterior end has no nuclei		Onchocerca volvulus
3	Has the microfilaria a sheath? (be aware that mixed infections are quite common!)		
3a	The microfilaria has a sheath	4	
3b	The microfilaria has no sheath	5	
4	How does the posterior (elongated end) of the sheathed microfilaria look like? (watch for the "real" end in microfilaria which are not nicely stretched out!)		
4a	Nuclei do not extend to the tip of the tail		Wuchereria bancrofti
4b	Nuclei extend to the tip in a continuous row		Loa loa
4c	Two separate nuclei at the tip of the tail		Brugia malayi
5	How does the posterior (elongated) end of the unsheathed microfilaria look like?		
5a	Nuclei extend to the tip of the blunt tail		Mansonella perstans
5b	Nuclei do not extend to the tip of the tail		Mansonella ozzardi