

LABORATORY RESOURCE

Spore-count interpretation guide

A practical reference for reading the numbers in a Sysco mould spore-trap report. There is no single statutory limit for indoor mould in the UK — interpretation relies on comparing indoor counts to a same-day outdoor reference, identifying water-damage indicators, and looking at genus mix.

Reading total spore counts (typical guidance)

Total spores/m ³ (indoor)	Typical interpretation
< 1,500	Background — generally consistent with a clean indoor environment.
1,500 – 5,000	Slightly elevated — investigate if mix differs from outdoor sample.
5,000 – 25,000	Elevated — likely indoor amplification; investigate sources.
> 25,000	High — strong indication of an active source or disturbance.

Indoor / outdoor ratio

An indoor:outdoor ratio > 2 for any genus, on the same sampling day, suggests an indoor source. Same-day outdoor sampling is essential — without it, results cannot be interpreted reliably.

Water-damage indicator genera

- **Stachybotrys** — chronic wet cellulose (plasterboard, paper, dust). Any indoor presence warrants follow-up.
- **Chaetomium** — wet wood, paper, drywall.
- **Aspergillus / Penicillium** — opportunistic; amplified by humidity and damp materials.
- **Ulocladium / Fusarium** — heavily wet conditions.

What spore traps cannot tell you

- Whether spores are viable (alive) — culture or DNA work is needed for that.
- Species-level identification within Aspergillus/Penicillium — requires culture or qPCR.
- Toxin presence — mycotoxin assays are a separate test.

When to escalate

- Stachybotrys or Chaetomium identified indoors (any quantity).
- Indoor:outdoor ratio > 5 for any water-damage genus.
- Occupant symptoms persist after a previous remediation.

Need help interpreting your report? Call 0800 433 7914 or email sales@sysco-env.co.uk — a hygienist will talk you through the numbers.

This is a Sysco Environmental Ltd resource. ISO 9001 accredited. Registered in England. Free to share with colleagues. © Sysco Environmental Ltd.