

**United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service, Science & Technology
Pesticide Data Program**

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Title: Packing and Shipment of Samples		
Revision: 7	Replaces: 4/18/07	Effective: 4/29/09

1. Purpose:

To standardize the packing and shipping procedures utilized by all participating States collecting samples for the USDA/AMS Pesticide Data Program (PDP).

2. Scope:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) shall be followed by the sample collectors to pack and ship PDP samples to the appropriate laboratory(ies) for analysis.

3. Outline of Procedure:

- 5.1 Packaging Procedures
 - Fresh Commodities
 - Processed Commodities
- 5.2 Shipment of PDP Samples

4. References:

- Sample Advisory Committee Meeting, December 2-4, 2008
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, March 19, 2007
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, April 13, 2006
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, November 18, 2004
- Sampling Managers Meeting, Manassas, Virginia, June 18-19, 2002
- Semi-Annual Program Plan, June-December 2002
- Federal-State Meeting, Seattle, Washington, October 30-November 1, 2002
- Sampling Managers' Meeting, Alexandria, Virginia, April 18-19, 2000
- SAMP PROC-05, "Collection, Packaging, and Shipping of Delicate Fresh Fruit and Vegetables," February 3, 2000
- Memo; Sample Sizes, January 21, 2000
- Federal/State meeting, Alexandria, VA, October 26-28, 1999

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5. Specific Procedures:

5.1 Packing Procedures for Commodities

These packing procedures provide minimum PDP requirements and are presented as general guidelines. Each participating State shall, as part of their internal sampling SOPs, have on file written procedures that include specific details as to the materials and procedures used for packing the PDP samples. Both the PDP SOPs and the State's internal SOPs will be used as the measure of compliance during Monitoring Programs Office (MPO) sampling reviews.

5.1.1 Fresh Commodities

5.1.1.1 Each sample shall be packed by the sample collector.

5.1.1.2 Sample collectors shall use precautions to prevent samples from being contaminated by compounds that will affect the analytical results.

5.1.1.3 Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office or shipping facility for packing. If samples are transported away from the collection site for later packing, samples must be maintained in a cooled container until they are packed for shipment.

5.1.1.4 Samples of commodities that require refrigerated temperatures to maintain their original integrity shall be placed in a pre-cooled, insulated shipping container. Because these commodities must remain properly cooled during shipping, an adequate number of frozen cold packs shall be placed in the shipping container, surrounding the samples (top, bottom, and sides), to ensure refrigerated temperatures of the product during transit. **Loose, wet ice is not an acceptable coolant material.**

5.1.1.5 Sufficient room shall be provided inside the shipping box so that samples are not squeezed, broken, bent, or bruised and there is no danger of rupturing hermetically sealed bags.

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5.1.1.6 To avoid sample damage, frozen cold packs shall not come into direct contact with the sample. The cold packs should be wrapped in an insulating material to ensure that samples do not freeze.

5.1.1.7 The collector shall use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, butcher paper, and/or bubble wrap) to prevent movement of the produce during transit, thereby protecting the samples from bruising or damage. These packing materials also provide insulation against sub-freezing temperatures during air transport. **Newspaper, brown butcher/kraft paper, and shredded computer paper are not acceptable packaging materials.**

5.1.1.8 If computer/electronic problems occur that prohibit the use of electronic Sample Information Forms (SIFs), the sample collector shall fax a SIF to the laboratory or a paper SIF shall be placed inside a separate plastic ziplock bag and packed inside the same shipping container as the corresponding site sample.

5.1.1.9 If a sample will not be collected, an electronic SIF must be completed for each site sample not collected and sent or emailed to MPO. If paper SIFs are used for notification of an uncollected sample, the paper SIF must be sent, faxed, or emailed to the receiving laboratory who in turn notifies MPO. (Refer to PDP SAMP PROC-04, Section 5.1.)

5.1.1.10 If commodities have been grouped for collection, it is permissible for more than one commodity type to be placed directly in the same shipping container. However, when packaging more than one fresh commodity type, collectors should attempt to package together fresh commodities that have similar temperature, moisture, ethylene gas, packaging, and shipping requirements to minimize product degradation. Information regarding these requirements is provided on each commodity Fact Sheet.

5.1.1.11 If the shipping container will not change hands, thereby maintaining chain-of-custody, it is not necessary for the packing box to be sealed [i.e., the collector “hand” delivers the site sample(s) to the laboratory]. However, the collector must ensure that the container lid fits tightly and securely so that it does not open during transit.

5.1.1.12 Delicate fresh fruits and vegetables shall be packaged and shipped in accordance with PDP SAMP-PROC-05.

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5.1.2 Processed Commodities

Packaging procedures for processed (canned, frozen, and concentrates) commodities are essentially the same as those for fresh commodities, with the exception of the following:

5.1.2.1 All containers of the sampled commodity must have the same lot number (time stamps may vary; however, the entire lot number must be the same).

5.1.2.2 Processed products shall be packed in a manner to conserve space, maintain temperature, and to minimize movement of product to avoid rupturing or crushing of containers while in transit.

5.1.2.3 Frozen samples must be packaged using a method that will ensure that the samples arrive at their receiving laboratory at least cold-to-the-touch.

5.2 Shipment of PDP Samples

5.2.1 In an effort to help reduce sampling costs, the reuse of shipping containers and coolants is encouraged. If a State elects to have a shipping container and packaging materials returned, a return shipping label must be included inside the box. Return shipping should be accomplished by the most cost effective means possible.

5.2.2 Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office or shipping facility for packaging.

5.2.3 Individual sample Fact Sheets shall be referenced for shipping time requirements.

5.2.4 Fresh and/or perishable commodities may be shipped to arrive at their respective laboratories at the latest by 5:00 p.m. on the day following sample collection if refrigerated internal temperatures can be maintained throughout transit. Receiving laboratories must approve this shipping schedule; otherwise, a 10:00 a.m. receiving time on the day following sample collection shall be followed.

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5.2.5 Frozen samples shall be shipped frozen by the sample collector on the date of collection in a manner that ensures they arrive at least “cold-to-the-touch” at the laboratory(ies). For “delicately frozen” commodities (i.e., fish), it is suggested that the product be frozen overnight before shipping.

5.2.6 Canned samples will be shipped at ambient temperature and should be shipped by ground to save on shipping costs.

5.2.7 If perishable samples are “hand delivered” to a local State office, shipping facility, or State laboratory, sample collectors must ensure that the product is placed in a pre-cooled insulated shipping container along with a sufficient number of ice packs to ensure refrigerated temperatures during transport.

5.2.8 The sample collector and/or primary State laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring that samples are shipped to the correct laboratory(ies) as provided quarterly on PDP Sample Shipping Assignment Charts.

5.2.9 Perishable commodities shall not be shipped on Friday or the day before a Federal or State holiday. Refer to commodity Fact Sheets for individual commodity shipping instructions.

5.2.10 Samplers should receive prior approval from the laboratory for any samples arriving on Friday or the day before a holiday.

5.2.11 Copies of shipping transactions for all samples shall be kept on file by the State in the event that shipping problems arise.

5.2.12 Any additional information regarding packaging, shipping, and temperature requirements of commodities will be provided on PDP Fact Sheets or sent to State Sampling Managers in writing from the MPO Sampling Manager.

5.2.13 Delicate fresh fruit and vegetables shall be shipped in accordance with PDP SAMP PROC-05.

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Revision 7

March 2009

- Added new reference in Section 4.
- References added for hermetically sealed bags.
- Shredded computer paper is no longer permitted as a packing material ("paper dust" becomes airborne and is a problem in the laboratories).
- If problem occurs with use of e-SIF, collector shall fax or mail paper SIF to the laboratory.
- Clarifications added on the return of shipping materials.
- Shipping time requirements will now be included on Fact Sheets.
- Timing of shipments for laboratory arrival changed from 10:00 a.m. following day of collection to 5:00 p.m. following day of collection—if received cold and if lab approves.
- Clarifications made on the shipment of frozen commodities.
- Canned goods may be shipped by ground to save on costs.
- Enhanced clarifications by word changes in many sections.
- Made formatting changes.

Revision 6

April 2007

- Updated References
- Updated Effective date
- Added phrase, "Loose, wet ice is not an acceptable coolant material." in Section 5.1 (c)
- Added phrase, "Newspaper is not an acceptable packaging material." In Section 5.1 (e)