

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

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Title: Packing and Shipment of Samples		
Revision: 6	Replaces: 4/24/06	Effective: 4/18/07

**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:**

- 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-5, "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 MPO sampling reviews.

Fresh Commodities

- a. Each sample shall be packed by the sample collector.
- b. Sample collectors shall use precautions to prevent samples from being contaminated by compounds that will affect the analytical results.
- c. 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 paks 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.**
- d. Frozen cold paks, if used, should be wrapped in recycled paper, paper towels, etc., to ensure that samples do not freeze should they come into direct contact with the cold paks.
- e. The collector shall use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, butcher paper, Styrofoam peanuts, shredded computer 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

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provide insulation against sub-freezing temperatures during air transport.  
**Newspaper is not an acceptable packaging material.**

- f. If computer/electronic problems occur that prohibit the use of electronic Sample Information Forms (SIFs) and a paper SIF must instead be used, the paper form shall be placed inside a separate plastic ziplock bag and packed inside the same shipping container as the corresponding site sample.
- g. 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, MPO must be notified and the paper SIF sent to the receiving laboratory. (Refer to PDP SAMP PROC-04, Section 5.1.)
- h. If commodities have been grouped for collection, it is permissible for more than one commodity type to be placed in the same shipping container. However, when packaging more than one fresh commodity type, collectors should attempt to package fresh commodities that have similar temperature, moisture, ethylene gas, packaging, and shipping requirements to minimize product degradation. Information regarding these requirements is provided in each commodity's Fact Sheet.
- i. 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.
- j. Delicate fresh fruits and vegetables shall be packaged and shipped in accordance with SAMP-PROC-5.

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:

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- a. It is not a PDP requirement that canned samples be placed in a sample container (bag). However, if they are not placed in a bag, the outside of EACH sample container must be clearly labeled for sample identification with the date, site number, and collector's name/initials.
- b. If a State chooses to place canned commodities in a sample container (bag), the container shall be sealed and identified with the date, site number, and collector's name/initials.
- c. All containers of the sampled commodity must have the same lot number.
- d. 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.
- e. Frozen samples must be packaged using a method that will ensure that the samples arrive at their receiving laboratory at refrigerated temperatures or lower.

5.2 Shipment of PDP Samples

- a. The return address must be clearly marked on the outside of the shipping container. A pre-paid return shipping label should be included if the shipping State wishes the return of the shipping container, packing materials, and/or ice paks. These materials should not be returned by express/overnight mail.
- b. Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office or shipping facility for packaging.
- c. PDP samples must be shipped overnight by a service that results in the sample arriving at the assigned laboratory(ies) no later than the day following sample collection, with the exception of canned products and other commodities that have been specified in writing by MPO. Two-day delivery service is acceptable for these types of commodities.
- d. Canned samples will be shipped at ambient temperature.

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- e. Frozen samples shall be shipped frozen by the sample collector on the date of collection in a manner that ensures they arrive “cold-to-the-touch” at the laboratory(ies).
- f. Any additional information regarding shipping of commodities will be provided to State Sampling Managers in writing from the PDP Sampling Manager.
- g. 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.
- h. Samples shall not be shipped on Friday or the day before a Federal or State holiday.
- i. Samplers should receive prior approval from the laboratory for any samples arriving on Friday or the day before a holiday.
- j. Copies of shipping transactions for all samples shall be kept on file by the State for a period of time in the event that shipping problems arise.
- k. Any additional information regarding packaging, shipping, and temperature requirements of commodities will be provided in PDP Fact Sheets or sent to State Sampling Managers in writing from the PDP Sampling Manager.
- l. Delicate fresh fruits and vegetables shall be shipped in accordance with SAMP PROC-05.

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*4/18/07*

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Revision 6

April 2007

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- 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)