

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

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Title: Packing and Shipment of MDP Samples		
Revision: 1	Replaces: : 04/01/01	Effective: 07/01/02

1. Purpose:

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

2. Scope:

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

3. Outline of Procedure:

- 5.1 Packaging Procedures
 - Fresh Commodities
- 5.2 Shipment of MDP Samples

4. References:

- April 15, 2002, MDP Public Meeting, Washington, DC
- January 10, 2002, MDP Public Meeting, Washington, DC
- Program Plan, July-December 2002
- Program Plan, January-June, 2002
- Program Plan, April-September 2001
- MDP Federal/State Meeting, Tallahassee, Florida, January 10-11, 2001
- Workplan for MDP Pilot Study, August 25, 1999

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5. Specific Procedures:

5.1 Packaging Procedures for Commodities

These packing procedures provide minimum MDP requirements and are presented as general guidelines. Each participating State shall, as part of their internal sampling SOPs, have written procedures which include specific details as to the materials and procedures used for packing the MDP samples. Both the USDA/AMS SOPs and the State's internal SOPs will be used as the measure of compliance during USDA/AMS sampling reviews.

Fresh Commodities

- a. Each site sample shall be packed by the sample collector.
- b. Collectors should use precautions to prevent samples from being contaminated during packaging.
- c. The larger plastic bag which contains the site sample may be wrapped with newspaper, paper towels, etc., to ensure that the sample does not come in direct contact with the gel paks and to provide additional insulation.
- d. The site sample(s) must be placed in a pre-cooled insulated shipping container along with the corresponding MDP Sample Information Form(s) (SIF). The SIF(s) should never be placed inside the bag with the site sample.
- e. Place the SIF inside a small plastic ziplock bag along with the site sample. If a sample will not be collected, a SIF must be completed and sent to the laboratory along with the other samples.
- f. If commodities have been grouped for collection, it is permissible for more than one commodity type to be placed directly in the same insulated shipping container.

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- g. If the pre-cooled insulated shipping container will not change hands, therefore maintaining chain-of-custody, it is not necessary for the container to be sealed (i.e., the collector “hand” delivers the site sample(s) to the laboratory). However the collector must ensure that the container’s lid fits tight and secure so that it does not open during transit.
- h. The collector should use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, butcher paper, bubble wrap, etc.) to protect the produce from bruising or damage during transit.
- i. Fresh commodity samples must remain properly cooled during shipping. Use a sufficient number of ice packs in each shipping container to keep the produce at a refrigerated temperature. Do not freeze the samples.
- j. At a minimum, sample collectors shall place a sufficient number of ice packs on the top and bottom of the sample to ensure the sample remains at refrigerated temperature during transit.
- k. Sample collectors must record on the MDP SIF the time the sample was officially packed for shipment to the laboratory.

5.2 Shipment of MDP Samples

- a. States required to transship MDP samples to other States must use an insulated shipping container (i.e., ice chests, insulated boxes, etc.) to maintain appropriate temperature.
- b. If a site sample(s) is shipped in an insulated shipping container, the return address must be clearly marked on the outside of the shipping container with a pre-paid return shipping label.

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- c. If samples are transported 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 gel packs.
- d. Samples requiring overnight shipping must be shipped by a service that results in the sample arriving at the assigned laboratory(ies) no later than the following day.
- e. The sample collector and State Sampling Manager, and/or primary State laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring that samples are shipped to the correct laboratory(ies) as provided on the quarterly MDP Sample Shipping Assignment charts.
- f. Samples shall be shipped so that they arrive at the laboratory on a weekday.
- g. Do not ship samples on Friday or the day before a holiday.
- h. Samplers should receive prior approval from the laboratory for any samples arriving on Friday or the day before a holiday.
- i. Any additional information regarding packaging, shipping, and temperature requirements of commodities will be provided in writing to State Sampling Managers by the USDA/AMS Sampling Manager.

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Revision 1

July 2002

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- Spelling and grammatical changes
 - Updated signature page position titles and office name and address.
 - Updated References
 - Updated Effective Date
 - Added “Each” in paragraph 5.1(a).
 - Added second sentence under paragraph 5.1(e).
 - Added “bubble wrap” under paragraph 5.1(h).
 - Added paragraphs 5.1(j) and (k).
 - Changed “source sample” to “site sample” and “sub-sample” to “lab sample.”