

HOW TO SUBMIT INSECT SPECIMENS FOR IDENTIFICATION

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1. Please send a completed A **Request for Insect Identification** form (see attached copy). Keep a copy for your own files. The information on the front of the *Request for Insect Identification* will speed our work and increase our confidence in the diagnosis; the information on the back of the form simply is for our mutual internal tracking.
2. Send dead specimens, packed so they arrive in sound condition; we cannot identify moldy, crushed insects.

Prepare your specimens as follows:

SOFT-BODIED SPECIMENS

such as CATERPILLARS, NYMPHS, other IMMATURES, SPIDERS and MITES

- Place in a vial or other tightly-capped container filled with rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol or ethanol (grain alcohol such as vodka); unless you send the specimen preserved in alcohol, it will decay in the mail;
- § DO NOT send specimens in water (your specimen will decay in transit) or in formaldehyde or any other preservatives except alcohol;

HARD-BODIED SPECIMENS

such as BEETLES, BEES and WASPS, FLIES, BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

- § Submit as dead, dry specimens inside crush-proof containers; padded mailing envelopes with protective corrugated cardboard inserts surrounding the specimen work well, as do US Postal Service Priority Mail Flat-Rate Boxes;
- § Gently rest the specimen on Kleenix; loose specimens break in transit. Do not use cotton because insects stick to the fibers and cannot be removed without breakage; likewise, do not tape specimens to sheets of paper;
- § Never send living insects
Kill insects by placing overnight in a freezer inside a zip-lock bag
OR kill via fumigation with ethyl acetate

NOTE: ethyl acetate is an ingredient in some fingernail polish removers, check labels for local products. A few drops on a crumpled-up paper towel inside a tightly lidded glass jar should kill most insects within 15-minutes. Recharge the jar as needed. DO NOT use plastic containers because the ethyl acetate can dissolve plastic; avoid letting the insect directly contact the ethyl acetate (add another dry paper towel inside the jar) because it often discolors the specimen.

PLANT SPECIMENS or other commodities showing damage symptoms

- § Place between several sheets of paper toweling (to absorb moisture) inside a zip-lock bag or other suitable container; it is usually best to also include suspect insect specimens with plants because damage alone may not be diagnostic for a specific insect.

WHEN POSSIBLE, ALWAYS SEND MORE THAN ONE INSECT/PLANT SPECIMEN

3. Mailing your specimens

- § Protect all containers with bubble wrap (to prevent breakage) and/or a piece of stiff cardboard (to prevent crushing); double-protect vials containing liquids by placing inside a zip-lock bag (to contain spills)
- § Mail in a padded envelope or mail tube with *Request for Insect Identification* form to

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If possible, mail early in the week or use overnight mail services to avoid weekend lay-overs.

- 4. Digital photographs as an alternative to specimens
 - § Send jpg files as email attachments to fmerickel@uidaho.edu
OR post images to your Web page and email the URL to fmerickel@uidaho.edu;
 - § ALWAYS include the *Request for Insect Identification* as an email attachment;
- note: photos can be a poor substitute for actual specimens; precise identification usually requires detailed examination of minute body parts not readily seen in photos;
- 5. We will email or FAX to you our diagnosis & any recommendations for control.
 - 6. Insect identifications are **FREE to citizens of Idaho** and are offered primarily as a resource for County Extension Educators and Master Gardener staff. We especially do not intend this service as a substitute for diagnoses already provided by Master Gardeners.

FEE FOR ALL OUT-OF-STATE SAMPLES: \$50 PER SAMPLE

checks payable to University of Idaho Bursar

We strongly encourage out-of-state clients to contact their own state Cooperative Extension System