

# 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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Entomological Sciences  
136 Agricultural Science Bldg  
875 Perimeter Drive MS 2339  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, ID 83844-2339

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phone: 208.885.7079  
FAX: 208.885.7760

**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