



PREPARATION OF INSECT SPECIMENS FOR IDENTIFICATION

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In order for insects to be properly identified and the best control recommendations to be made, the specimens must be in good condition and at least a minimum amount of collection information supplied. Specimens that are incomplete, damaged, moldy, attached to tape, or squashed can only be identified to general groups. The better the condition of the specimen, the more precise identification and control recommendations. In addition to specimen condition, collection information as to how the insect was causing a problem, where it was found, what it was feeding on, and symptoms of damage will assist identification. Insect specimens may be taken to the your respective county Cooperative Extension Service (CES) offices or mailed directly to:

Department of Entomology
S225 Agric. Sci. Bldg. North
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546-0091

11/03

All specimens must be accompanied by an Insect Identification Form available from the county CES office. On this form be sure to include your name, address, phone number, the area where the problem was observed, the plant, animal, product, or structure affected, type of damage caused, and severity of damage. A portion of the material that the insect is damaging may be included with the specimen sent for identification. This is often useful when the name of the plant being damaged is unknown, or when the damage is difficult to describe. Other information such as how long the insect has been present and any attempts at control can often aid identification and control recommendations.

Specimens can be placed in small rigid containers such as glass-screwtop vials, plastic pill vials, or film canisters. Soft bodied insects should be put in alcohol to prevent drying (film canisters will leak alcohol). Rubbing alcohol from a drugstore will work well. Do not use liquids other than alcohol to preserve the insects. Hard bodied insects may be placed directly in the container without alcohol. Moth and butterfly specimens should not be placed in alcohol. Include as many specimens as possible. Several dozen specimens of a small insect is not too many. These containers are then placed in rigid mailing tubes with some paper to prevent the container from banging around in the tube. Run tape once around the lids of the mailing tubes when tightened.