

Collecting Fecal Samples for Priority Mail (USPS) Shipment Through Vacuum Sealing

Supplies Needed:

- Gloves
- Lubricant
- Vacuum Sealing system, vacuum bags (one/animal)
- Cooler and cold packs to keep samples cold during collection
- Sample submission form
- Box for shipment

Mail samples **Priority Mail using the United States Postal Service (USPS) on a Monday, Thursday or Friday**. This accommodates the extra time needed to move through the Virginia Tech mail system. Samples can be collected the day before mailing if needed.

1. Put on a clean glove. Apply a nickel size amount of water or water-based lubricant to index and middle fingers (**Step 1**).
2. Insert index and middle fingers into the rectum of the animal, one finger at a time. No need to go very deep. Spread fingers to allow air into the rectum. The air duplicates fullness in the rectum and a wave of muscular movement will often move feces out into your hand (**Step 2**).

Note: Don't use this collection method to sample very small or young animals (less than 2 months old). If you can't insert two fingers into rectum don't force them. Another option is to collect a sample **immediately** after the animal has naturally deposited it. Rectal fecal sample collection is most successful when the animals have been resting for a while, so if you need to pen them up to do the collection, let them rest there for a couple of hours before collecting the samples if possible.

3. Remove ~4-6 grams of fecal matter. A heaping plastic teaspoon approximates the correct amount (**Step 3**). There is a minimum sample volume needed for the test.
4. Place each sample into a vacuum seal bag (one sample/bag). Each bag should be individually labeled with the animal's name or number, the farm name and the date collected.
5. During collection, keep all samples on ice until samples are properly vacuum-sealed. Do not put samples in direct contact with ice/ice packs to prevent freezing.



6. Vacuum seal samples as soon as possible after collection. After vacuum sealing, samples can be kept at room temperature prior to shipment.

View our video clip on fecal sample collection for USPS Priority Mail Shipment:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJvzXeL8QhE&feature=youtu.be>

Shipping Instructions:

It is important to carefully review and follow the shipping instructions for the lab that you are sending the samples to including filling out and enclosing any sample submission forms. Vacuum sealing the samples allows for the time needed to ship them USPS Priority Mail. Be sure the lab is open to receive the samples the day they are due to arrive (usually not on weekends or holidays).

For more information including our information sheets, *Why Do Sheep and Goat Fecal Egg Counts*, *How To Do The Modified McMaster Fecal Egg Counting Procedure* and our [demonstration video](#) on fecal egg counting, visit our website at <http://web.uri.edu/sheepngoat>. The video can also be viewed directly from the URI YouTube channel page (UniversityOfRI): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZQymZKe_hs.

This information sheet was developed by the Department of Fisheries, Animal and Veterinary Science, College of the Environment and Life Sciences, University of Rhode Island. Updated April 2019. This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program Project LNE15-342 and USDA NIFA Animal Health and Disease Program Project 1007290. URI provides equal program opportunity.

