

Sampling and Shipping Instructions for Microbial Analysis of Agricultural Water



ALABAMA EXTENSION

AgWater
Safety Program

IMPORTANT!

Read and follow these instructions completely before collecting your sample.

Your sample is time sensitive and must be mailed or delivered to the **Auburn University Food Safety Laboratory** the same day that you take the sample.

Don't forget to place the ice packs in the freezer a day before taking the water sample.

Sampling Instructions

1. Before taking your sample, call (334) 844-3021 or email (crodrigues@auburn.edu) to verify that the lab will be open to receive your sample. Samples should be received within 6 hours of collection but will be accepted if received within 24 hours of collection. **Ideally, collect your water sample in the morning to give you enough time to return the package the same day.**
2. Collect a water sample in a sterile 100 mL bottle (available from your sampling kit). Do not touch or rinse the interior of the bottle. Only open the bottle immediately before collecting the sample. Use the bottle to collect the sample; do not collect water in other containers and then transfer them into the collection bottle as this could contaminate the sample.
 - ▶ For **surface water**, collect the sample near and at the same depth as the system intake, when possible. Avoid collecting samples close to the bank (less than 2 feet), and avoid stirring up sediment, which may interfere with test results.
 - ▶ For **well water**, sanitize the faucet inside and out by rubbing with an alcohol prep-pad or a cloth soaked in undiluted bleach. Let the water from the faucet or piping run for approximately 3 minutes before collecting the sample. If you have recently shocked your well with chlorine, you must wait at least 3 days until the chlorine dissipates before collecting a sample.
 - ▶ If collecting a sample from the **irrigation system**, flush the system for 3 to 5 minutes before collecting your sample from the farthest sprinkler, microjet, or drip tape line.
3. If submitting more than one sample, clearly label each bottle with the sample location and the date and time of collection.
4. Place the water sample on **frozen ice packs** in a cooler. Do not freeze the sample, as this will affect the test results.
5. Immediately deliver the sample by hand or ship it overnight to the Auburn University Food Safety Laboratory following the shipping instructions.

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Shipping Instructions

1. **Reuse** the same shipping box to return the sample.
2. Do not ship samples on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. The lab cannot receive samples over the weekend.
3. Make sure you include the water sample and the frozen ice packs inside the cooler.
4. Close the cooler and place it back inside the shipping box (the same one the cooler kit came in).
5. Look inside your sampling kit to find a prepaid FedEx return label inside a packing slip pouch.
6. **Do not** remove the return label from the packing slip pouch.
7. Remove the back sticker from the packing slip pouch.
8. Stick the return label packing slip pouch on top of the old shipping label.
9. Immediately after sampling, drop your package in a FedEx drop-box location.
Find a FedEx drop-box location at <https://local.fedex.com/en/drop-box-self-service>.
10. When you drop your package in any of the chosen locations, make sure the package will be delivered the next day.
11. If you have sampling or shipping instruction questions, call (334) 844-3021 or email crodrigues@auburn.edu.