



NOS Marine Forensics - Standard Protocol Collecting and Shipping Samples in Ethanol

Please note: These directions are for collecting samples in ethanol, which is readily available to most agents and scientists in the field. For long-term storage of samples (particularly voucher samples), we prefer salt-saturated DMSO. Contact us if you would like for us to send you a DMSO collection kit.

1. Take each sample using a clean razor blade or scalpel. Aim for the sample to be about the size of a pencil eraser. If you do not have access to enough blades to use a new one for each individual, please rinse the blade well with ethanol or rubbing alcohol between samples.
2. Place each sample in a separate tube to prevent contamination between samples. Sample size should not exceed 1/10th of the volume of the ethanol in the tube. Use a pencil or indelible pen to label each tube with a unique identification number. As ethanol can readily remove ink if leaks from the tube, please place each tube in a labeled bag, or prepare a second label with pencil and paper, and slip the label into the tube with the ethanol and sample. Ethanol will not affect pencil.
3. *Snap the white cap firmly back onto the tube. There should be a loud click (sometimes the tube will require a second click to be fully closed) and **the cap should fit all the way down to the “ridge” at the top of the tube when the cap is completely secure.***
- 4a. **If the samples are voucher samples**, please complete a “Certification of Species Identification of Standard Sample” form for each separate species you are including, and place the form(s) in an envelope accompanying the samples. We would also like to have any sample-related metadata that you normally collect, such as collection location (lat-long or place name), date collected, sex, size, etc. You may include this in printed form, or email us a spreadsheet. We would also welcome photos of the sampled animals to file with the species certification forms.
- 4b. **If the samples are evidence to be analyzed**, please label each tube with the case, evidence, and/or item number, and complete the “NOS Lab Request.pdf” form. The “NOS Lab Request.pdf” form and a chain-of-custody should accompany the samples when shipped. Your agency’s chain-of-custody form may be used, or we can provide one for you.
5. Samples should be shipped by overnight courier. Please call or email if you are shipping voucher samples and you need our account number. Samples should only be shipped on Monday through Thursday, as no one is available to accept shipments at the lab on Saturdays.
6. Please call and let the Trey Knott or Kathy Moore know when samples are being shipped.
7. Ship samples to:
Evidence Custodian
NOS Marine Forensics Lab
219 Fort Johnson Road
Charleston, SC 29412
evidence.custodian@noaa.gov

** This protocol of standard operating procedures (SOPs)/ guidelines (SOGs) fully incorporates the NOAA/ NCCOS Environmental Management Systems (EMS) requirements and conforms to the Executive Order 13423. The SOPs/SOGs include appropriate considerations regarding evaluating and minimizing an environmental footprint, and implementing energy and water conservation directives.*



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Questions?

Feel free to contact us if you would like us to supply you with a sampling kit or if you have any questions about sampling, preserving, or shipping evidence:

Trey Knott, Forensic Biologist
specializes in finfish, lobster, and misc. species
phone: 843-762-8621
email: trey.knott@noaa.gov

Kathy Moore, Forensic Biologist
specializes in sea turtles, marine mammals, and sharks
phone: 843-762-8514
email: kathy.moore@noaa.gov

Evidence Custodian
email: evidence.custodian@noaa.gov

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