

## Advice Sheet 7: Getting samples to the laboratory and booking a courier

### Introduction

At NRM, we understand that a lot of time is spent taking a sample. It is therefore essential to ensure two things:

- That the sample is representative (see our advice sheets for more information);
- That the samples that arrive at the laboratory are in the condition in which they were sampled and clearly labelled so that the correct analysis is performed on the correct sample.

### How do samples get transported to the laboratory?

Whilst direct delivery of samples by customers is possible, generally they are transported to the laboratory by the Royal Mail or a courier company.

Although NRM has excellent relations with these companies, we cannot guarantee the security of samples in the care of third parties. It is therefore essential to package samples carefully to protect them from damage in transit.

### What packaging is available?

NRM provides packaging for all analyses and sample types. The packaging is designed to be secure in transit, easily labelled, and of the correct dimensions so that enough—but not too much—sample is taken.

If you would like to order kit, please contact NRM's stores department on:

- Telephone: 01344 893921
- Email: [stores@nrm.uk.com](mailto:stores@nrm.uk.com)
- Fax: 01344 890972
- Website: <https://cawood.co.uk/order-supplies/>

### Why do I need to fill the box, bag, or bottle?

The sampling kits are designed so that, if filled, they will provide a sample of sufficient size for all analyses.

If the container is not filled, there will be insufficient material for analysis. You will also run the risk of an unrepresentative sample. We do appreciate that, in some circumstances, soil material might be valuable (e.g. golf green rootzones). However, if you don't fill the container to the required level, then you may be asked for more sample, resulting in delays and compromising the value of the data.

### How do I package a sample?

Firstly, ensure that your sample is well mixed (see relevant advice sheets for the material being sampled) and then fill the self-sealing bag, box, or bottle. Do this one at a time and clearly label each with a permanent marker.

Group your samples as per the sample submission form that you have filled out and package in an outer container.

## What special measures do I need to take for certain samples?

Certain materials require extra care when packaging. Biologically active samples, such as slurries and digestates, require more secure packaging. Please contact the laboratory if you are unsure of the packaging required for your sample.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to secure samples so that they do not provide a hazard to third party distribution companies or laboratory staff on arrival. You must ensure that appropriate hazard warnings and material safety data sheets accompany samples where necessary and that you comply with any regulations concerning the transport of the materials that you are submitting.

For time sensitive samples (including analysis for available nitrogen and digestate), appropriate packaging is required to prevent decay of the sample or the analyte. NRM can provide cool boxes for transporting these samples. These samples must be booked for collection Monday to Wednesday to optimise sample integrity.

Please remember that if you only have a finite amount of sample available, or the sample is particularly valuable, it may be worth keeping hold of a percentage of the sample in case of damaged or lost parcels. This is not a common occurrence but is something to keep in mind when sending samples to the laboratory.

## Postal service

All NRM bags and boxes which are pre-printed to be compatible for the Royal Mail postal service have a label which is trackable and traceable.

To make full use of the 'track & trace' service you will need to drop the packets at your local post office. If this is thoroughly inconvenient, then they still can be put into a post box. However, the parcel's tracking information will be incomplete. The associated charges are listed below.

|                    | Less than 3 soil samples | 3 soil samples or more | All other sample types | Total weight limit* |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Sample postage bag | £3.50                    | £3.50                  | Free                   | 1 kilo              |
| Soil postage bag   | £3.50                    | Free                   | N/A                    | 1 kilo              |
| Soil postage box   | £3.50                    | Free                   | N/A                    | N/A                 |

\*Individual overweight samples are charged at £3.50. Individual weight limit is based on analysis requested.

## Our courier service

We currently use Fed-Ex for our courier service. Below indicates the associated costs.

| Location                            | Cost   |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Mainland UK (ABPR Sample)           | £16.25 |
| Scottish Highlands                  | £16.25 |
| UK Offshore Islands (including C.I) | £38    |
| Northern Ireland                    | £38    |
| Republic of Ireland                 | £64    |

**If you need any clarification on what you will be charged, please do not hesitate to contact the laboratory and we will be able to guide you accordingly.**

## The process

All the below details are necessary to ensure your package is collected and delivered to us correctly. Regardless of how you book the courier collection, the same information will be required. So, please ensure you know the information at time of booking.

- Customer client code: a letter followed by 1, 2 or 3 numbers unique to you
- Collection address: the postcode is critical to the courier company
- The type of sample to be collected (e.g. soils, slurry)
- Approximate number of samples
- Email address: this is required so that the courier barcode label and manifest can be sent to the collection contact, printed and attached to the parcels ready for the driver's arrival
- Date the collection is to be booked for
- Number of parcels to collect (please note this is not sample numbers but outer containers the courier driver will be collecting)
- Telephone number and name for an appropriate person on site
- The time the samples will be ready for collection: this period must be a minimum of 4 hours. We apologise but we are unable to specify the exact time of collection.
- The location the parcel will be left e.g. reception
- Please specify if an individual parcel weight exceeds 20kg as special arrangements will need to be made.

## Contact details to book a courier collection

- Telephone: 01344 886338 (telephone line open 9am – 5pm)
- Email: [enquiries@nrm.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@nrm.uk.com)
- Fax: 01344 899037
- Website: <https://cawood.co.uk/book-sample-collection/>

## Courier service dos and don'ts

### Do:

- ✓ Leave your package in an easy place to find (e.g. front doorstep or reception)
- ✓ Book your collection up to 5 days in advance
- ✓ Contact us before 12pm if you want your package collected the same day
- ✓ Print the barcode label and manifest prior to collection
- ✓ Book time sensitive samples for collection Monday to Wednesday

### Don't:

- ✗ Phone us—we will phone you if there is a problem
- ✗ Book the courier yourself other than through NRM
- ✗ Send us your request twice
- ✗ Request pick-ups for Saturday or Sunday
- ✗ Give a window of less than 4 hours for the courier to collect your parcel