

USDA Permit Requirements for Organisms Commonly Used for Classroom Instruction

Many of the live organisms used for science experiments in schools require a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) permit for their importation, possession, or transport across State lines. These organisms include, but are not limited to, plant pathogens, ants, walking sticks, snails, and butterflies. The importation, possession, or transport of preserved or dried pest specimens do not require a USDA permit (Form 3-177). They do, however, require an import permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Form 3-200-3).

USDA uses information provided in the permit application and other resources to identify the risks associated with the regulated organism and to establish permit conditions to prevent potential environmental consequences. Permit conditions will vary according to pest, but will address issues such as packaging, transport, storage, and disposal.

The Plant Protection Act of 2000 defines a plant pest as any living stage of any insects, mites, nematodes, slugs, snails, protozoa, or other invertebrate animals, bacteria, fungi, other parasitic plants or reproductive parts thereof, viruses or any organisms similar to, or allied with, any of the foregoing, or any infectious substances that can directly or indirectly injure or cause disease or damage in any plant or parts thereof, or any processed, manufactured, or other products of plants.

An environmentally friendly and cost-effective approach to obtaining plant pests for educational purposes is to harvest the pests locally. Plant pests collected from the environment within your State do not require a USDA permit for possession or intrastate movement. However, a permit would be required for subsequent interstate movement or possession by non-permit holders (e.g., other teachers and students).

Typically, it is the responsibility of the receiver of plant pests to obtain a permit, but some biological supply companies may already possess permits for shipments to your State. Check with your biological supply company to see if they have such a permit. Biological supply companies may also supply customers with information sheets on the handling and management of these permitted organisms.

The following table summarizes the plant pest permit requirements and applies only to shipments within the United States. Imports of the listed organisms nearly always require a permit. Do not order or accept organisms from foreign sources without a permit. If an organism does not appear in the following table, contact USDA's Plant Protection and Quarantine's Pest Permit Evaluation staff at (877) 770-5990 for further guidance. Organisms that do not require a USDA permit may require a State permit from the local agriculture, fish and wildlife, or environmental agency. Additionally, the State agencies may have supplemental permit requirements.

USDA Permit Requirements for Domestic Movement of Organisms

Permit Required	Permit not Required
<i>Insects</i>	
Ants	Aquatic Insects (most)
Beetles (including meal worms)	Dragonflies
Butterflies ¹	Drosophila Flies
Cockroaches	House Flies
Crickets	Honey Bees
Grasshoppers	Parasites (e.g., jewel wasps)
Milkweed Bugs	Predators (e.g., ladybeetles)
Moths	Mosquitoes
Termites	Wax Worms
Walkingsticks	Praying Mantids
<i>Other Invertebrates</i>	
Millipedes	Centipedes, Scorpions, Vinegaroons
Pill Bugs (sow bugs)	Crustaceans
Aquatic Snails (most)	Earthworms
Terrestrial Snails (all) ²	Marine Invertebrates
Slugs	Spiders (including tarantulas)
Nematodes (plant parasitic)	Nematodes (parasitic on invertebrates)
<i>Pathogens (bacteria, fungi, viruses, mycoplasma)</i>	
All Pathogens of Plants	Pathogens of Plant Pests (e.g., biological control agents)

¹See the USDA Butterfly Environmental Release Decision Chart at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/butterflies/index.html>.

²See Mollusk Decision Matrix at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/plantpest/snails_slugs.html for various approved species for educational use.

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