

GAP Water Sampling Guide

Start with Appropriate Container

Containers for water sampling should hold at least 100ml. The interior should be sterile, and the container should be sealed to prevent contamination.

Keep Bottle Sterile

Do not put your fingers inside the sterile bottle and do not put the sterile bottle lid on the ground. Try to hold the lid while you collect your water sample. If the bottle or lid is touched or contaminated, just ask the laboratory for another sterile bottle.

IRRIGATION WATER FROM A WELL

- Collect the sample as close to the water source as possible. This means collecting the sample from the outlet that is closest to the well.
- Prior to collecting, the rim of the outlet (valve, spigot, etc.) should be sanitized. This can be done using a flame or by wiping the value with an alcohol or chlorine-containing wipe.
- Let the system run. Water should be allowed to flow out of the outlet long enough to flush the system. A good rule of thumb is to run the system at least 3-5 minutes longer than is necessary to empty the volume of stagnant water remaining from the last use.
- Fill the container at least 3/4 full and close the bottle as quickly as possible.

SURFACE WATER – PONDS AND LAKES

- Try to sample at a depth of 6-12 inches. If a dock or other structure is not available for access to deeper water, one can attach sample container to a pole.
- Care should be taken not to sample too close to the bottom, as sediments may be collected with the sample. If you need to walk into the water, sampling should be done ahead of the muddy front that is stirred up by motion. Remember that excess rainfall can also stir up bottom sediments and alter test results. Samples should not be taken immediately after rainfall.
- Best practice is to collect the sample during a time when the water would normally be used for irrigating.
- If irrigating from flowing surface water, such as a creek or stream, and it is necessary to wade into the water, be sure to sample from the upstream side, again to avoid collecting stirred up sediments.

WATER USED FOR POSTHARVEST

(similar to collection from an irrigation well)

- Select an outlet close to where water lines come into the packing facility.
- All attachments such as aerators or garden hoses should be removed.
- The outside rim of the outlet should then be sanitized with alcohol or a bleach-containing wipe.
- Water should run through the outlet for 3-5 minutes.
- Fill the sample container, taking care to make sure that the container is open for as little time as possible.

SAMPLE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

- Once the sample is collected, the container should be marked with your name, the date and time of collection.
- Be sure to fill out the appropriate Sample Submission Form.
- Samples should be kept as cool as possible by icing or refrigerating until they are delivered to the laboratory.
- Many labs have a maximum time interval between collection and sample receipt – usually 30 hours. Samples received too long after collection will be processed but the longer delay time will be noted on the report.

