



EARTHWORM VERIFICATION

A scientist is available to verify your earthworm identifications or try and identify earthworm species that are not listed on the taxonomic key.

Sending Live Specimens

Select one representative adult of each earthworm species that you would like verified. For example, if you found four different species, you will be sending four different adult earthworms. Make sure it is an adult earthworm with a fully developed clitellum and place the specimen a separate container. Add some wet bunched-up paper towels to a plastic container which will serve as bedding and protect the earthworms during transport.



Place the adult worm in the container and poke a few air holes in the lid, then label the container and secure the lid with packing tape. In a box, place the container(s) surrounded by newspaper for protection and include a copy of your datasheet with the specimens.



Send the container(s) to Worm Watch at the address below:

Dr. John W. Reynolds
Oligochaetology Laboratory
18 Broadview Court
Kitchener, Ontario
Canada N2A 2X8

Please use Priority Post, Express Post or courier to make sure the earthworms arrive alive.



NOTE: Please send earthworms at the beginning of a week and not on a Friday to minimise the possibility that the earthworms will be stored for a long period of time in too hot or too cold conditions. Earthworms can survive for approximately two weeks if kept in a container with wet paper towels in a cool dark or shady place.

Sending Preserved Specimens

Select specimen for species verification. Place the earthworm into a clean small screw top plastic container. For example, clean sample-size shampoo bottles work well. Do not use any flip top containers as they will leak. Fill the vial with about 20 ml of colourless drinking alcohol (vodka, white rum, and tequila are preferred), 70% ethanol, or methylated spirits.

Children and students should be supervised by an adult or teacher while handling these liquids.

NOTE: Beer, wine, and rubbing alcohol are not acceptable for preservation.

Gently drop the earthworm into a vial and close the lid firmly. **Clearly indicate on the label what kind of liquid is in the bottle.** Unmarked vials will be discarded.

Once the earthworm stops moving (about 1 minute), open the vial, drain off the liquid and soil/debris, wash the vial and dead worms separately with cold water, place the clean worms in the vial and tightly fill the vial or container with cotton balls to the top.



Add enough liquid so that the cotton is completely saturated and there is a very small amount of excess liquid on top of the cotton balls (see figure 5). It is important that there is a sufficient amount of liquid preservative in the vial so that the earthworm remains in contact with the liquid at all times during shipping.

Firmly secure the lid and turn to make sure nothing leaks out. Label the screw-top container with the name of the earthworm species or unknown (unknown #1, #2, etc.), where you found it, and your name and email address or telephone number. Place your vial inside a Ziploc bag. We recommend the freezer Ziploc bags because they are made out of a thicker plastic. Remove the air and seal the bag. If including more than one container, make sure that all containers are labelled with your name, what is inside the container, and where you collected the worm.



Tightly package your containers in newsprint, or other packing material like Styrofoam popcorn or popcorn inside a small box or sturdy envelope. Then the containers will not shift around during transport to the lab. **Please include a copy of the datasheet** (see figure 5).



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Apply sufficient postage to the package as **we will not accept packages C.O.D.**
Please send your live earthworms Monday - Thursday to avoid specimens being stored in either extreme cold or hot for extended periods of time. Preserved specimens are also best sent on a weekday.