



PRELIMINARY IDENTIFICATION UPDATES AND DISCUSSION

Jo-Ann Bentz-Blanco, Director

PPQ Emergency and Domestic Programs

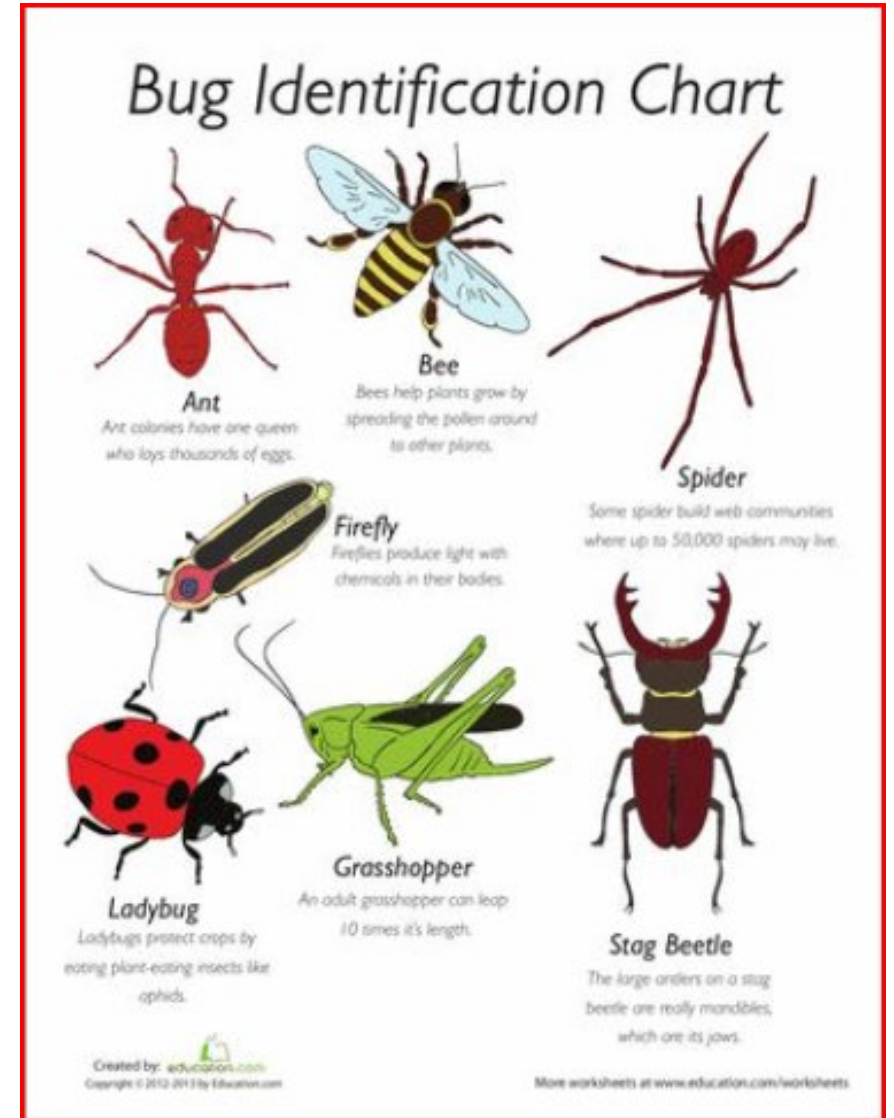
Pest Surveillance and Emergency Management

What is pest identification?

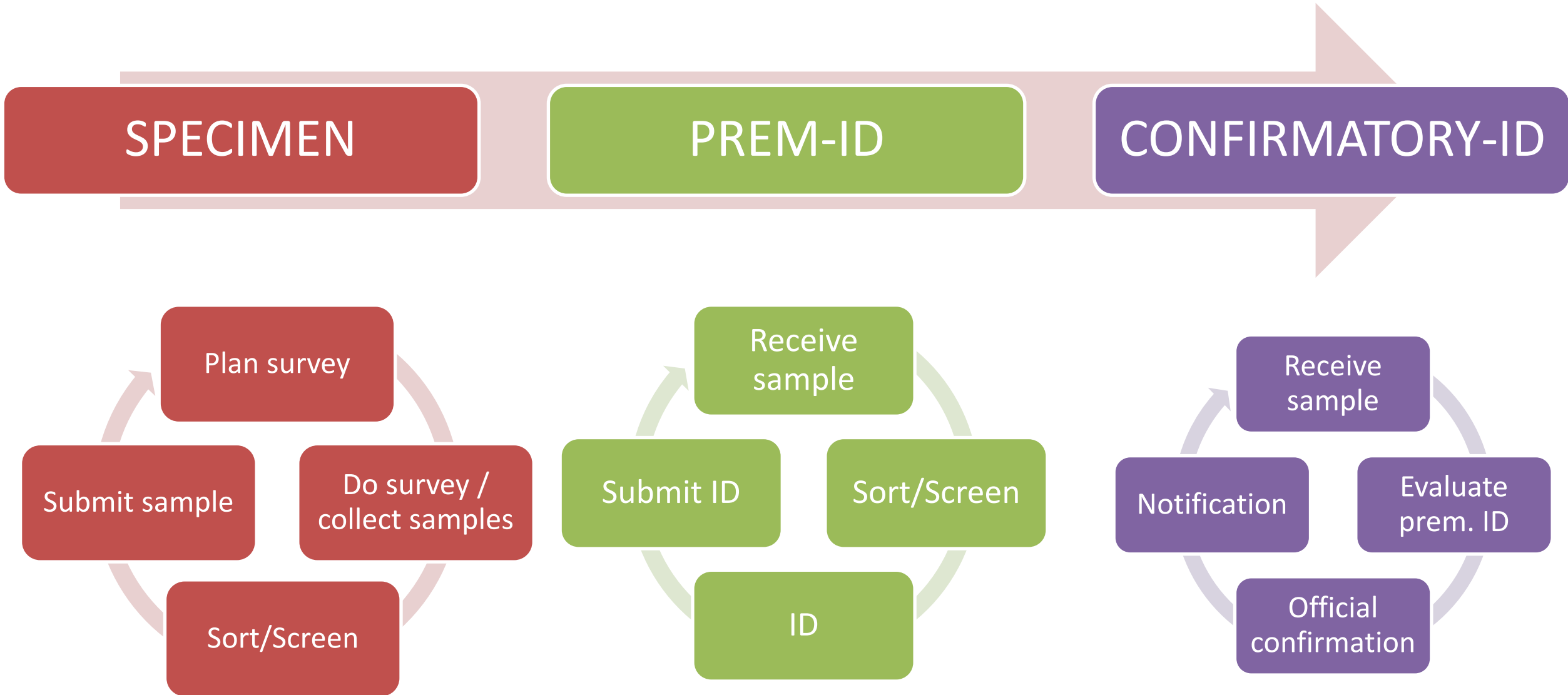
The process of assigning an existing taxon name to an individual sample organism.

In plain language this means, ‘giving a scientific name’ to a specimen.

However, giving a scientific name to a specimen entails ‘going through a process’.



What is the process?

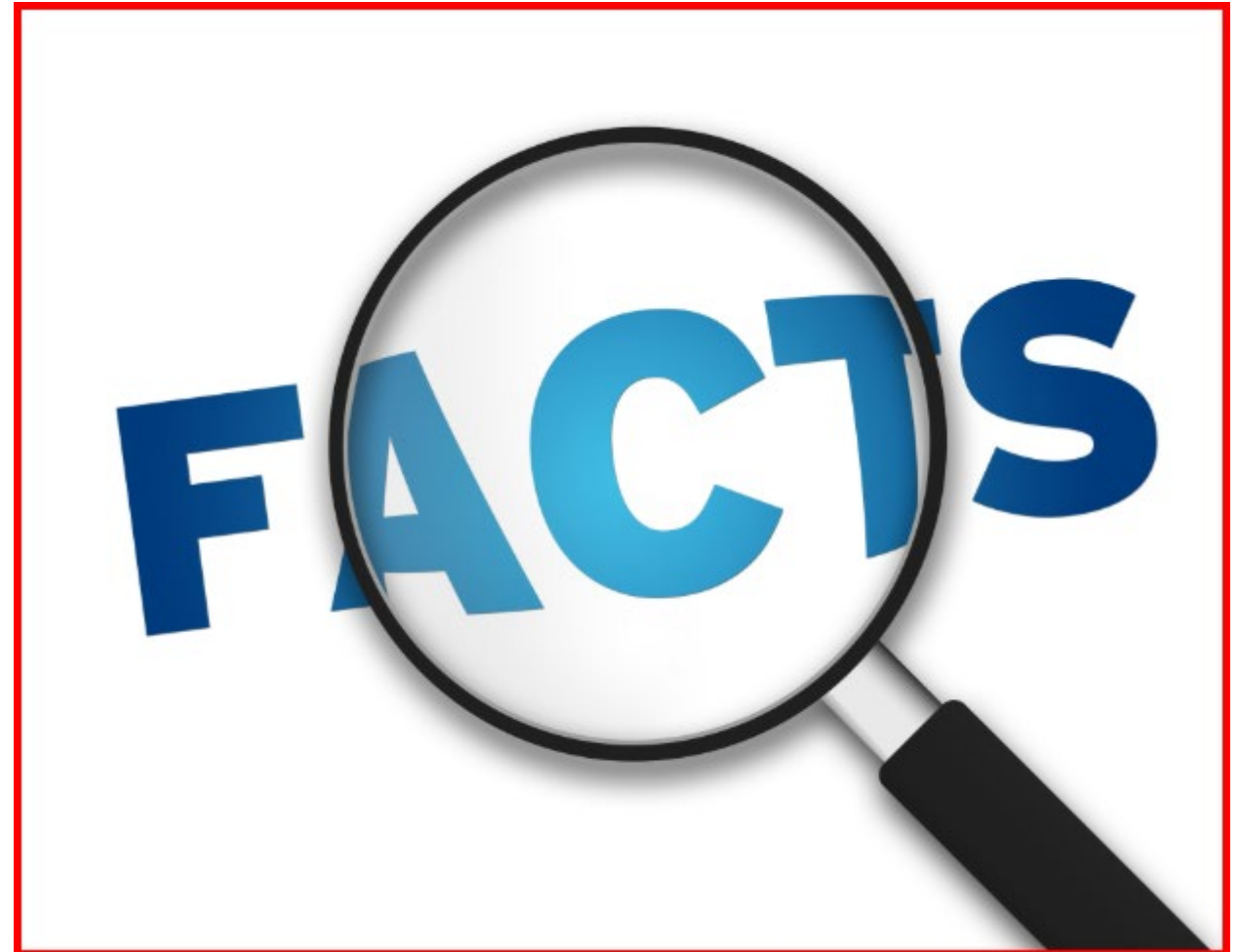


DEFINITIONS to be aware of:

- **Preliminary Determination:** The result of an identification or diagnostic process that concludes in a tentative, or provisional, taxon assigned to a sample.
- **Final Determination:** The end result of an identification or diagnostic for the specimen, as recorded in the Agricultural Risk Management (ARM) system.
- **Official Confirmation:** The communication of a final determination, can occur at either a national or local level, if approved.
- **Target pest:** the organism toward which the survey is being directed.
- **Non-target pest:** everything in the sample that is not the target pest.



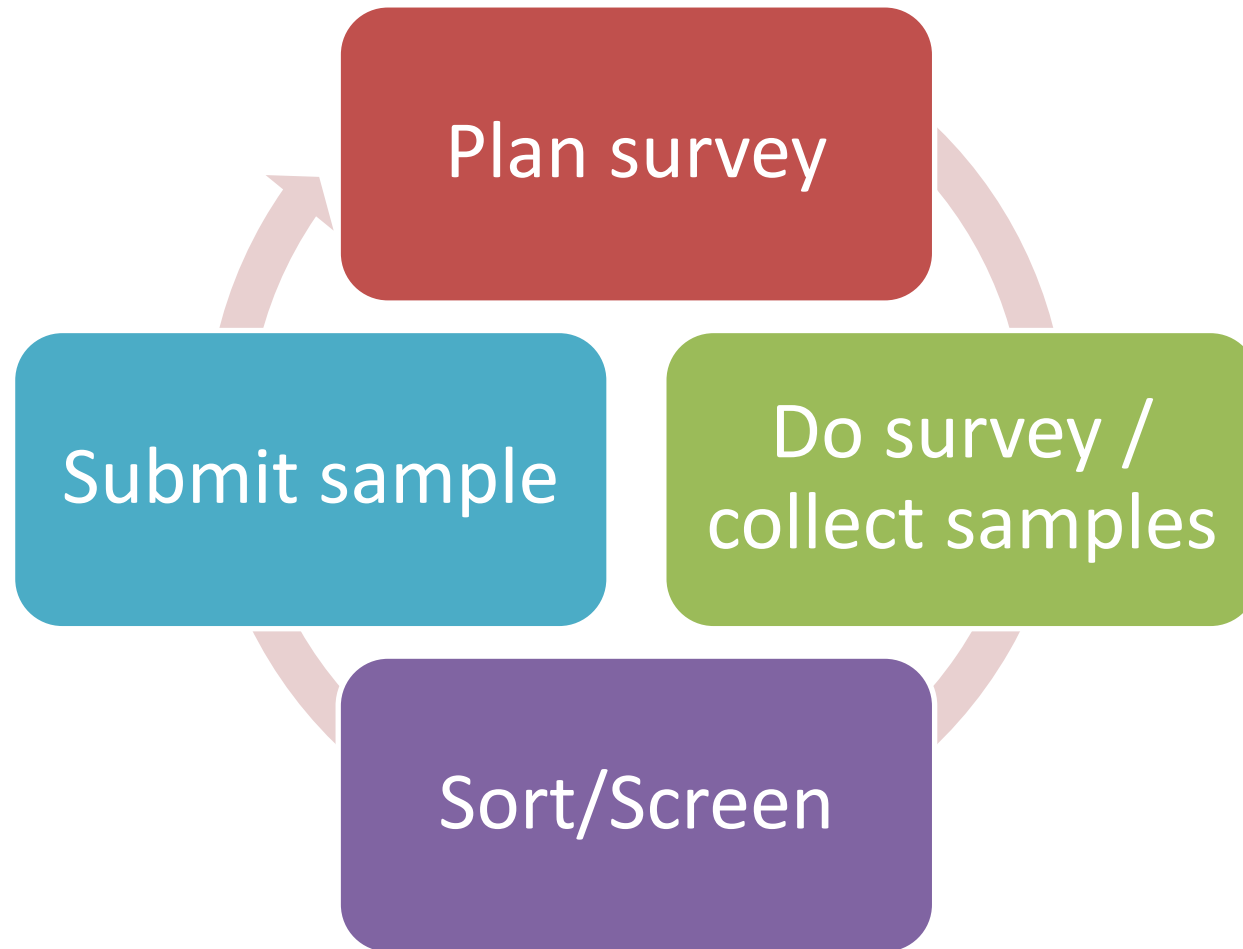
**FACTS ABOUT THE
'SPECIMEN' PROCESS**



Survey Programs:

	CAPS	PPA 7721 goal 1s	PPQ PEST DETECTION	PPQ PORT ENVIRONS
FUNDING SOURCE	PEST DETECTION LINE	PPA 7721	PEST DETECTION LINE	AQI USER FEES
WHO DOES SURVEY	COOPERATORS	COOPERATORS	PPQ FO EMPLOYEES	PPQ FO EMPLOYEES
TARGET PESTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national priority pests (including domestic pest programs) • state priority pests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national priority pests (including domestic pest programs) • State priority pests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national priority pests (including domestic pest programs) • delimiting / emerging pests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pests along high-risk import and international travel pathways
WHO DOES PREM-ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘in-house’, local entity • prem-ID centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘in-house’, local entity • prem-ID centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FO domestic identifiers • prem-ID centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FO domestic identifiers • prem-ID centers

Requirements:

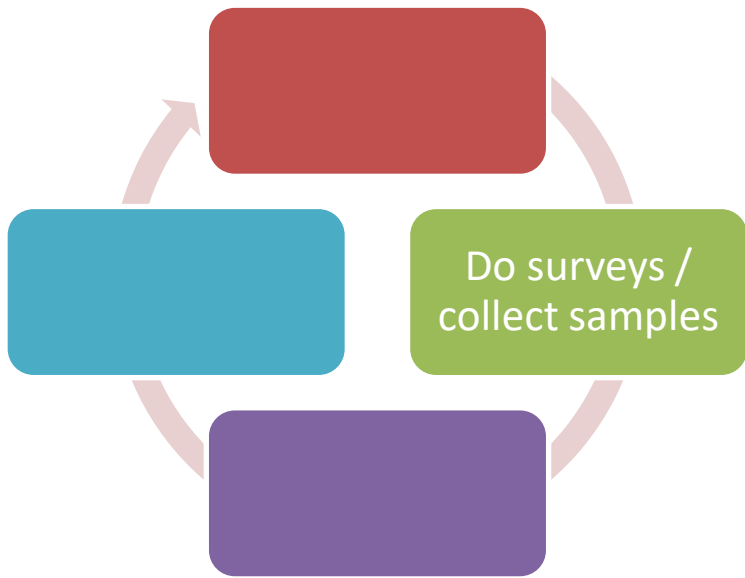


Plan the survey



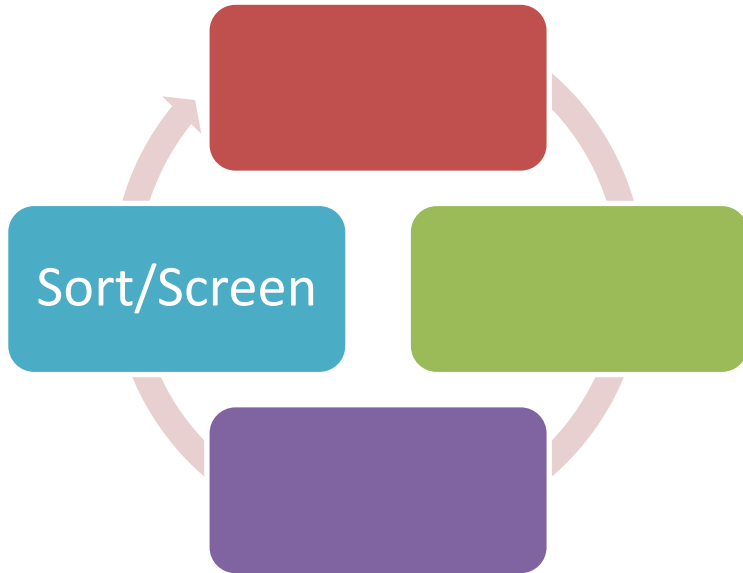
- Identify National Priority Pests to survey.
- Select a prem-ID center.
- Contact the prem-ID center. Report projected sample lots you plan to submit (projection numbers, allotments), provide the date range for the surveys, and the frequency of the sample submissions.
- Confirm that an identifier or institution that you have used before will continue providing taxonomic support for the proposed target(s).
- Include prem-ID information in the survey plan / survey summary form, before submitting.

Cooperator must cover preliminary identification of non-priority pests (pests of state concern).



Do surveys and collect samples as planned in the survey plan.

Sort / Screen



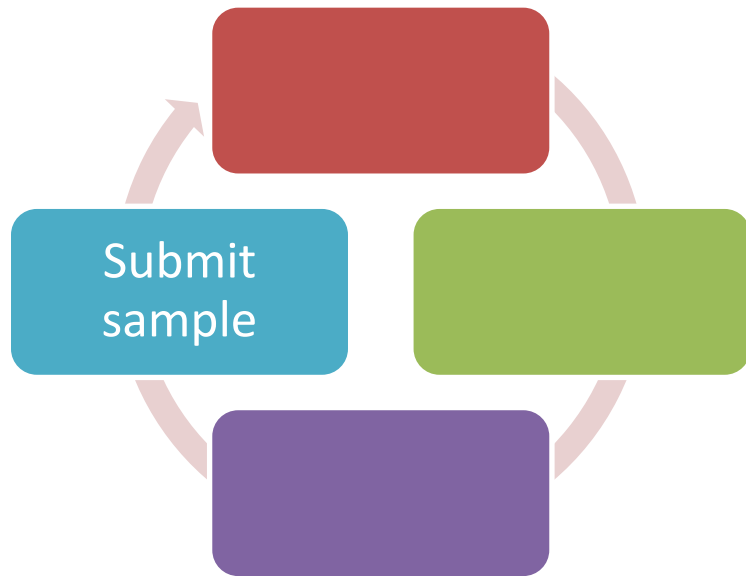
Approved methods inform to sort/screen or to send entire (raw) for identification. If not specified, assume that samples should be sorted at some level. There are screening aids that also provide guidance.

As survey samples are collected, cooperators (surveyors) must:

- remove 'junk' from samples
- sort target pest samples (what the survey is looking for)
- screen samples and separate suspect target pests from non-target pests
- ensure that collection information is correct / complete
- prepare and forward target pests to the prem-ID center

Do not wait until the survey season is over to do the sorting / screening of samples as this may impact the quality of the samples!

Submit sample for prem-ID

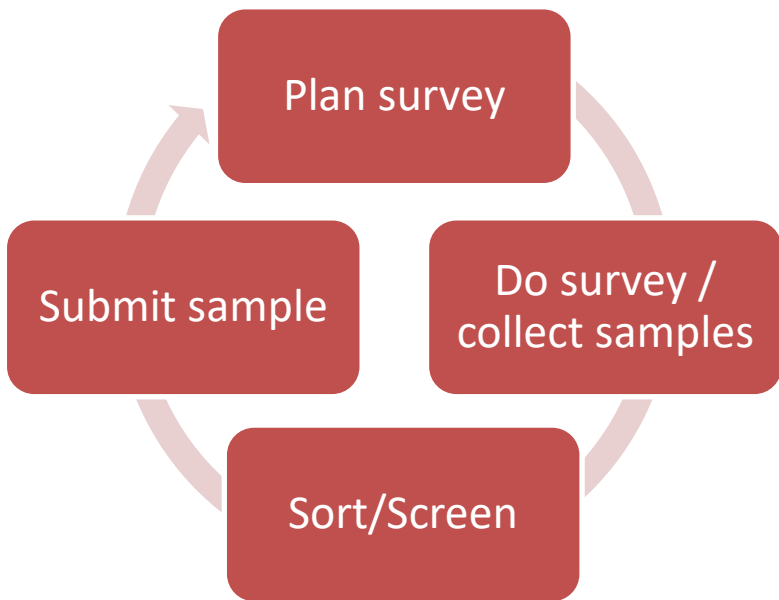


- Cooperators must follow approved methods or approved job aids for the submission of samples.
- Submit **National Priority Pest** target samples to prem-ID center according to survey plan.
- Include survey funding source information for all samples submitted to a prem-ID center.
- Keep track of your projections and submissions.
- Ensure that non-priority pests are not submitted along with national priority pest samples to the preliminary identification centers.



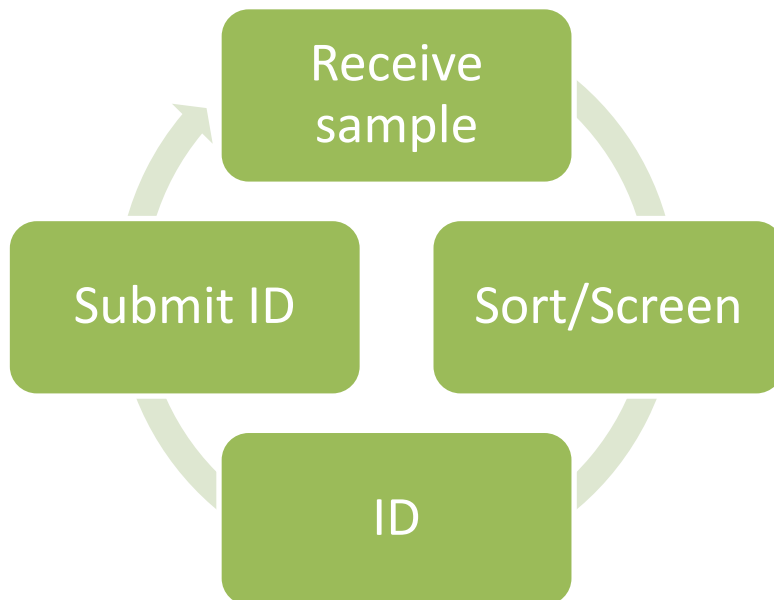
COOPERATORS

SPECIMEN



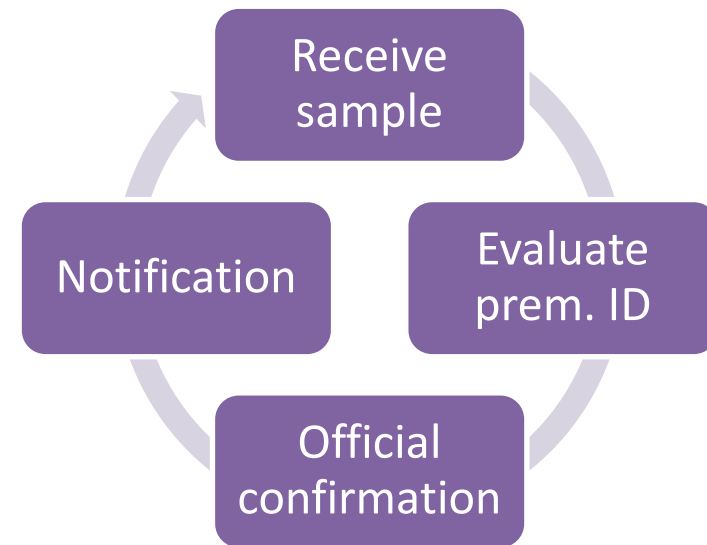
COOPERATORS OR ID CENTERS

PREM-ID

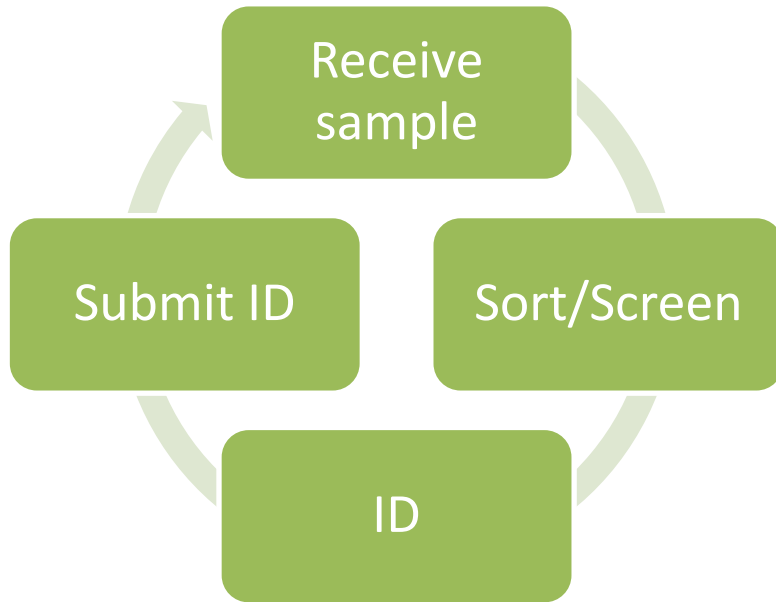


PPQ NIS

CONFIRMATORY-ID



FACTS ABOUT THE ‘PREM-ID’ PROCESS



- Who does it depend on the survey program and arrangements in place.
- It is never done by PPQ NIS.
- The focus is on national priority pests, as these are known not to occur in the United States or are of limited distribution subject to potential quarantine restrictions.
- The process is completed when the preliminary id is entered into ARM requesting an official confirmation by NIS.

PREM-ID CENTERS

PPQ has arrangements in place with four institutions:

- Eastern Regional Screening Center, Mississippi Entomological Museum, Mississippi State University
- National Identification Center, Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Exotic Pest Survey Screening Center, Washington State Department of Agriculture
- Pest Screening and Identification Services, Biodiversity Services Facility (BSF), Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Requirements for PREM-ID Centers

Prem-ID centers must:

- Ensure that received samples are suspect priority pests.
- Document and report the survey funding source for all samples they process.
- Submit a work plan and accomplishment report and ensure that they can provide the service for which they got PPQ funding.

They must ensure that they have capacity to:

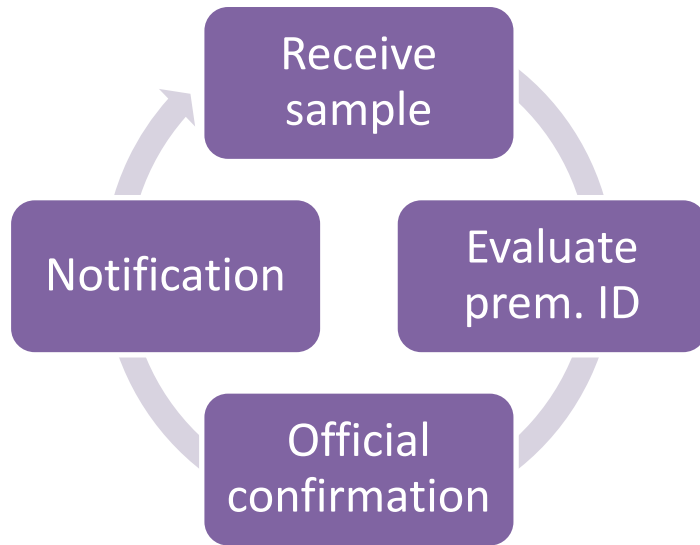
- process raw samples straight from the trap or visual survey.
- process screened samples.
- identify target pests.
- Ensure that IDs are done by SMEs.
- Ensure the timely processing of samples and results to submitter.
- Work with cooperator for submission to PPQ NIS of targets for official confirmation.

HOW PPA 7721 SUPPORTS PRELIMINARY IDENTIFICATION?

PPA 7721 provides funding for early detection survey work to address high-risk pests across the United States; to meet the increasing demands of surveying for invasive pests that are of national concern; address the most significant pests for which a robust national detection program is necessary to protect agricultural, environmental, and natural resources; and support export certification and retain or expand U.S. export markets.

PPA 7721 provides the funding for cost-efficient identification centers that accept and process survey samples from other states.

Confirmatory Identifications



<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/official-confirmation-preliminary-id>

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forms | Careers | Contact Us

Home Travelers Trade Animals Plants Funding About

Home > Plants > Plant Health > Plant Pests and Diseases > APHIS Cooperators: Confirming New Pests in the U.S. Environment

APHIS Cooperators: Confirming New Pests in the U.S. Environment

Last Modified: January 25, 2026

Requesting Official Confirmation of a Preliminary Pest Identification

These instructions are for Federal agencies, State and local offices, universities, and other cooperators who made a preliminary pest identification during a pest survey or other APHIS-regulated activity. The public should report plant pests to their [State Plant Health Director](#).

Expand All

Make a Preliminary Identification	+
Contact APHIS	+
Complete the Required 391 Form	+
Prepare Specimens for Shipping	+
Notify APHIS Before You Ship	+
Mail the Package	+
Notification of Results	+

Facts about the confirmatory process:

- Technically, submission for official confirmation is needed when suspect pests either are not established domestically or are found in limited distribution areas subject to potential quarantine restrictions.
- If the preliminary ID of a survey sample qualifies as a new continental United States (CONUS) detection, new state detection, or new county detection, the preliminary ID must be confirmed by PPQ's NIS to be considered an official detection.
- All submissions that need official confirmation must have a corresponding Diagnostic Request record in ARM with the required preliminary identification or PPQ will not assign a National Specialist for a final identification.

FOR AWARENESS:

The process of official confirmation is to identify the sample to the extent that it is supported by the best science available, or to determine if a match can be made with a known target identity based on the sample (i.e., a Confirmed Positive or Negative Determination).

The process concludes when such a final identification or diagnostic is a “Positive Confirmation, Negative Determination, or Inconclusive Result” and communicated back to the SPRO/SPHD of the impacted state and to the submitter.

GRAY AREAS:



SORTING / SCREENING:

- Are cooperators doing any sorting or screening of samples before submitting?
- Do we have criteria as to which cooperator should sort/screen before submitting?
- Are all cooperators sending samples without sorting/screening? Who can, or not, send 'raw' samples to the prem-ID center?

RAW SAMPLES:

At times, preliminary institutions will ask for the ‘raw’ stuff for their own purposes, as they get to keep what is submitted.

- Is this a separate charge? If not, should it be?
- Should PPQ use the limited funds to support this or to support doing the identification?

The ID-center is expected to ID priority pests and not everything in the raw sample.

WHAT TO SUBMIT:

At times, it is not clear what the cooperator can submit to the preliminary id center.

- Are we focusing on national priority pests?
- When is it appropriate to submit pests of state concern?
- Do we have criteria as to how we are supporting trade, i.e., when the state needs to survey for a particular pest because it is a ‘trade’ commodity and the state needs assistance in meeting conditions of entry into a foreign country?
- Do we have decision criteria for when non-priority pests could be submitted to a preliminary ID center? Or a log of past decisions to be used for future reference?

PPA 7721:

Because the focus of PPA 7721 goal 1S is on ‘high-risk pests across the United States, invasive pests that are of national concern, pests that need a robust national detection program, and support export certification and retain or expand U.S. export markets’, do we have parameters as to what can be submitted to the ID centers?

- How is prem-ID handled for PPA 7721 goal 1 survey targets that are not national priority pests? How are these handled or identified?

DOMESTIC IDENTIFIERS:

At times, samples have been sent to the PPQ FO identifiers for screening/prem-ID.

- When would a PPQ identifier be used over a preliminary screening center?
- Are cooperators using the domestic identifiers? Do we have examples?

ORIGINAL INTENT:

Originally, PPQ's intent was to assist the states that didn't have local resources to do the sorting/screening, or the prem-ID.

- Do we need to do a review and assess the use of this service and how it is being used? Over used? Under used?
- Do we need to set-up criteria?

In summary: Preliminary identification is a process made up of sub-processes.

What we have:

- PPQ, cooperators, and ID centers involved with this process.
- Many needs and limited funding.
- Changing priorities requiring new parameters.

What do we want:

- To streamline this process among all survey programs.
- Identify and address critical needs.
- Be transparent with the cost on investment and increase return.
- Ensure that suspect target samples submitted to NIS from ID centers that we fund, have been carefully identified.
- Minimize the time between sample submission to the prem-ID center and submission to PPQ NIS, especially for high risk or priority pests.

WHAT IS NEXT:

- Discuss the gray areas identified and collect feedback.
- Set up definitions and parameters for inclusion in guidance documents.





Jo-Ann Bentz-Blanco, Ph.D.

Director

Plant Protection and Quarantine | Emergency and
Domestic Programs

Pest Surveillance and Emergency Management