

Collections Procedure

Deaccessioning

Version: 2.0

1 Procedure statement

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that staff, research associates, volunteers and visitors of DAF Biological Collections are aware of the processes they must follow when deaccessioning specimens.

2 Background and context

The Plant Pathology Herbarium and Insect Collection hold authoritatively identified specimens that represent virtually all of the known plant pathogens and insect pests that occur in Queensland. The collections include irreplaceable specimens that are essential for diagnostics and identification, taxonomic and phylogenetic research, continued market access for agricultural products, State legislation (*Biosecurity Act 2014*), plant health management and education.

3 Scope

This procedure applies to Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) staff working in the Plant Pathology Herbarium and Insect Collection.

4 Abbreviations, acronyms and definitions

Accessioning is the process of assigning specimens a unique number, labelling and entering record information into a Collection Management System.

The **Biosecurity Act 2014** commenced on 1 July 2016. It replaced a number of separate pieces of legislation that were previously used to manage biosecurity. It provides a consistent, modern, risk-based approach to safeguard our economy and agricultural industries.

Biosecurity Queensland is a business group within the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries that manages and coordinates the Queensland Government's efforts to prevent, respond to, and recover from pests and diseases that threaten the economy, agricultural and tourism industries, environment and way of life.

The **Collection Management System** is the database used to manage and report information about specimens held in the collections. Specimen records are managed by the KE EMu® database.

The **Collections** encompasses the Plant Pathology Herbarium and Insect Collection. Both collections are co-located at the Ecosciences Precinct, Dutton Park, Brisbane, and are managed by Biosecurity Queensland.

Deaccessioning is the process of removing specimens permanently from either the Insect Collection or the Plant Pathology Herbarium for transfer or disposal. Deaccessioning requires prior approval of the curator or collection managers.

The **Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)** is a Queensland Government department that aims to develop productive and profitable agriculture, fisheries and forestry, while protecting our valuable natural resources.

The **Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR)** is a Commonwealth Government department that aims to strengthen Australia's primary industries, improve the health of Australian freshwater ecosystems, and safeguard Australia against exotic animal and plant pests and diseases.

An **Exchange** involves the non-commercial transfer of scientific specimens between two or more institutions for the purposes of developing and improving collections. This can be a useful method for entomological collections to source reference specimens of exotic insect taxa which underpin the rapid diagnosis of foreign insect pests.

A **Specimen** is an individual insect (or group of insects), diseased plant part, living culture, or genomic DNA extracted from an organism.

5 Key principles

Generally collection staff working in the Insect Collection and Plant Pathology Herbarium collect and maintain specimens in perpetuity. However, it is sometimes necessary to deaccession specimens to curate and manage the collections. Furthermore, the exchange of specimens between institutions can be a useful way of improving collections. Specimen exchanges are subject to the same deaccessioning procedures as specimen transfers and disposals.

5.1 Deaccession criteria

Specimens being considered for deaccessioning must meet at least one of the following criteria.

The specimen:

- a. Is irrelevant to the purpose of the collections.
- b. Lacks adequate collection information, and does not conform to present day accessioning criteria.
- c. Is missing (i.e. lost or stolen) and remains so for more than 12 months.
- d. Is a duplicate, or has accidentally been accessioned more than once.
- e. Has been requested by the original collector/donor.
- f. Has been requested as part of a permanent exchange by another institution, and its transfer will not significantly impact taxonomic coverage in the collections.
- g. Is unable to be preserved or curated adequately.
- h. Has deteriorated to a point where it is no longer scientifically useful or no longer conforms to present day accessioning criteria.

5.2 Conditions for deaccessioning

Before any specimen is deaccessioned, collection staff shall make reasonable efforts to determine all legal and ethical considerations that may be relevant to the proposed transfer or disposal of specimens. Collection staff must ensure that:

- a. The institution has clear ownership of the specimen.
- b. There are no restrictions that prohibit deaccessioning of the specimen.
- c. There are no restrictions on the use of the specimen (e.g. copyright, material transfer agreements).
- d. The reasons for the deaccessioning the specimen are adequately documented, and relevant paperwork is retained in perpetuity.

5.3 Deaccession procedure

Collection staff may recommend the deaccessioning of specimens if they believe one or more criteria for deaccession (Section 5.1) have been met. Collection staff must complete a deaccession report (see Figure 1) and submit this to the relevant collection manager or curator. The deaccession report will specify the reasons for deaccessioning and the method of disposal, which may include return to collector, transfer to another institution or disposal.

Following deaccession, specimen records in the Collection Management System must not be deleted. Instead, specimen records shall be retired (i.e. transferred to an administration Security Group so that they no longer appear in standard user search results) so they are accessible in perpetuity by the database administrator for record keeping and auditing purposes.

Deaccession Report



List of specimens to be deaccessioned

Reasons for deaccessioning (circle appropriate option)

- Irrelevant to the purpose of the collections
- Inadequate collection information
- Missing specimen(s)
- Duplicate specimen(s)
- Requested by original collector/donor
- Requested for permanent exchange by another institution
- Unable to be preserved or curated adequately
- Has deteriorated to a point where no longer scientifically useful

Disposal method

- Return to original collector/donor
- Transfer to another institution
- Exchange with another institution
- Destruction
- Not applicable (specimen missing)

Deaccession certification and endorsement

Requesting officer Name: _____
 Title: _____
 Signature _____
 Date _____

I certify that the specimens listed above have been returned, transferred, exchanged or destroyed in accordance with the Deaccessioning policy, and that specimens have not be gifted, sold, or transferred to collection staff or their families.

Endorsing officer Name: _____
 Title: _____
 Signature _____
 Date _____

Figure 1. Example Deaccession Report.

5.4 Disposal methods

Any specimens that have been selected and approved for deaccessioning by the relevant collection manager or curator will be disposed of using one of the following methods:

- a. Return to original collector/donor: Where specimens have been requested by the original collector or donor, consideration will be given to repatriation.
- b. Transfer to another institution: Where specimens are unable to be preserved or curated adequately, consideration will be given to transferring or donating the specimens to an institution that is better resourced or has appropriate taxonomic expertise. For example, arachnid specimens preserved in ethanol were transferred to the Queensland Museum in 2010 following rationalisation of the alcohol collection at the Ecosciences Precinct.
- c. Exchange with another institution: As is the case for temporary loans, permanent exchanges of specimens from the Plant Pathology Herbarium and Insect Collection will only be made available to institutions/organisations rather than to individuals. Specimen exchanges will only take place if it does not significantly impact taxonomic coverage in the collections. Exchanges will involve the transfer of an equivalent number and/or value of specimens by each institution.
- d. Destruction: If the specimen is unable to be preserved adequately or has deteriorated to a point where it is no longer scientifically useful it shall be disposed of by the relevant collection manager or curator. It is recommended that deaccessioned plant disease and insect specimens are disposed in clinical waste bins located in the General Microbiology Laboratory. Clinical waste bins are collected weekly by Ace Waste and the contents destroyed by high temperature incineration.

Note: Any specimens held under an import permit issued by the Commonwealth Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) shall first be autoclaved at 121°C for 30 minutes (15 psi) prior to disposal in clinical waste bins.

Deaccessioned specimens shall not be given, sold, or transferred to collection staff or their families.

6 Responsibilities and accountabilities

Curator	Approve the deaccessioning procedure. Sign off on deaccession recommendations submitted by collection staff.
Collection managers	Implement the deaccessioning procedure. Ensure that Collection staff are made aware of deaccessioning procedures. Sign off on deaccession recommendations submitted by collection staff.
Collection staff	Follow deaccessioning procedures as directed by Collection managers and the Curator.

7 Source documentation

Not applicable

8 Related and reference documents

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Revision history

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1.0	06/01/2017	Initial draft
2.0	23/02/2017	Revised procedure