

HELP!


Something I did not order appeared in my pet and plant shipment

Properly responding to hitchhikers in a shipment can protect the environment and your store!




What to do if you find a hitchhiker

If your store has a protocol for this situation, follow it. If your store doesn't:

 **1. Quarantine the hitchhiker** in a separate tank or other appropriate container until you can figure out exactly what you should do with it.

 **2. Report the hitchhiker to your supervisor.**

 **3. Contact your statewide aquatic invasive species (AIS) expert.**

Search for your state's AIS coordinator for help. Check the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) experts database (fws.gov/anstaskforce/experts/) for AIS experts at your state fish and wildlife agency. Experts also exist within university-based Sea Grant and Extension programs.

 **4. Create a protocol for this situation.**
Contact a local AIS expert if you need help.

DO NOT RELEASE A HITCHHIKER

- ✘ Do not release it into the environment.
- ✘ Do not take it home as a pet.
- ✘ Do not sell it to a customer.

Hitchhikers could be invasive species that cause harm to the environment!

Hitchhikers

Hitchhikers are animals or plants you **did not order** that arrive in a shipment you did order. They are often small snails and crayfish in orders of fish, but they can also be plant fragments or other animals. It is difficult to identify a hitchhiker's exact species, so treat any hitchhiker like it could be invasive.



Invasive species

Invasive species are plants and animals that are introduced into a new environment that cause harm to the habitat, other creatures or human health.

In 2021, an observant pet store employee spotted invasive zebra mussels on Marimo moss balls, a plant product sold at aquarium and pet supply stores. Zebra mussels cause significant environmental and economic damage by attaching to hard surfaces and by outcompeting other animals for food. They clog water pipes, litter beaches with sharp shells, and can contribute to blue green algae blooms. Thanks to the pet store employee, who contacted an invasive species expert, a successful national response removed contaminated product in 46 states, preventing potential new introductions.



Hitchhikers could be crayfish, snails and tadpoles that are tough to identify.



Some are species that are native to one part of the U.S. and invasive in others. In some cases, a single individual could start a new population. This makes your prevention efforts important!

With your help, we can keep the pet care community and our environment thriving by preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

