

Problems with Warping Gel Trays

Many of our partners have mentioned a problem with gel trays “leaking” agarose. In most of these cases, the problem has been traced back to pouring the agarose without first letting it cool. If the agarose is poured immediately after the agarose has melted, it is far too hot and will warp the gel tray. In some cases, we have observed hot agarose actually causing the bonds between the bottom of the tray and its sides to dissolve.

The solution to this problem is to allow the agarose to cool to 60°C or below before dispensing into the gel tray. If the flask, containing the melted agarose, is too hot to hold in your bare hands, it’s too hot to pour into the tray.

Missing washers, from the screws holding the gates to the tray, can also cause the trays to leak agarose. Without the washer, the nylon screw can “bottom out” and will not allow the gate to form a tight seal against the tray.

If the tray is too warped or you’re missing one or more of these washers, you can always use some lab or masking tape to seal the ends of the tray. Be certain to make your program director aware of these or any other equipment problems when you return the equipment to the center.