

## Biosecurity Guidance for Wild Trout Trust Conservation Officers

By practising good biosecurity, WTT Conservation Officers (COs) are working to minimise the risk of spread of non-native species, plant and animal pests, as well as their parasites and diseases, when working in the field.

### Levels of biosecurity

The GB Non-Native Species Secretariat recognises three levels of biosecurity based upon the risk posed by an activity being conducted and the area in which it is taking place. These are:

1. Basic Level

All visits to any field sites. This includes visual inspections carried out from the bank (without entering the water) during Advisory Visits.

2. Medium Level

Visits to aquatic ecosystems with known invasive non-native species e.g. killer & demon shrimp (*Dikerogammarus* spp.), swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*).

Handling of plants for example in removal operations (e.g. Japanese knotweed / Himalayan balsam) during restoration work.

Handling of animals (e.g. signal crayfish) during invertebrate assessments for Advisory Visits.

3. High Level

Surveying/sampling in aquatic situations involving many sites in different parts of the catchment/country.

Visiting areas with ongoing/recent disease outbreaks e.g. known chytrid infection or outbreak of crayfish plague.

WTT COs assume the 'worst case scenario' and, to counter any unknown risks, adhere to the following biosecurity guidelines:

1. Arrive with clean kit and footwear; see 7.
2. Plan visits so that the known most risky site is the last of the day; i.e. up a gradient of potential risk.
3. Keep access to a minimum. If practical, don't take vehicles onto riparian land and keep to established tracks. Try to park vehicles on hard-standing, avoiding livestock areas where possible.
4. Clean and disinfect\* footwear before vacating each site, if practically possible; otherwise, at a designated site at the end of the day (usually the CO's home).
5. If vehicle has entered a riparian area, ensure tyres & wheel arches are adequately cleaned and disinfected (mud and vegetation to be left at each site) if practically possible; otherwise, as for 4.



6. Disinfect\* clothing and hands if amphibians, fish or invertebrates are handled. Avoid contact with dead or dying amphibians or crayfish.
7. Between visits, follow the Check, Clean, Dry protocol for all clothing and equipment. When drying between visits is impractical, then use immersion in hot water (45oC) for 15 minutes (following Anderson et al., 2015).

It is extremely rare that WTT COs undertake field work involving many sites in different parts of the catchment/country within a limited time-frame. Hence, equipment and clothing should have been checked, cleaned, disinfected / immersed / dried in between visits. For the purposes of an Advisory Visit to a site with potentially infectious material (e.g. known chytrid infection or crayfish plague), COs should avoid entering the water.

\*WTT uses Virkon Aquatic tablets to routinely disinfect clothing and equipment in the field, following the manufacturer's recommendations for use.

#### Reference

Anderson et al. (2015) Invaders in hot water: a simple decontamination method to prevent the accidental spread of aquatic invasive non-native species. *Biological Invasions* 17, 2287-2297

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