

Antarctic Biosecurity: Equipment, Boot and Clothing Cleaning

Introduction

Visitors could accidentally bring alien seeds, pests or diseases (as a group, called non-native species) into Antarctica or transfer them between different Antarctic ecosystems. There is no conclusive evidence that tourists have introduced non-native species or transmitted diseases to Antarctic wildlife but there is indirect and circumstantial evidence that raises concern.

To minimize the chances of bringing non-native species into Antarctica, the *International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators* (IAATO) recommends decontamination practices similar to those used by quarantine authorities in many countries to prevent the introduction of alien pests and diseases.

At the end of this note is a **Biosecurity Self-Audit Check List** to help you check whether your clothing and equipment is thoroughly clean.

1 Before leaving home

- 1.1 Antarctica is an isolated region and is relatively free of introduced diseases. We can each help to keep it so by good preparation before we leave home.
- 1.2 All equipment, boots and clothing must be clean before you depart for Antarctica.
- 1.3 Take special care if you go trekking, hiking, backpacking or visit a farm before your Antarctic expedition. You must clean your equipment, boots and clothing thoroughly to remove all soil and organic material.
- 1.4 Equipment such as ice axes, camera tripods, sleds or vehicles can harbor soil or seeds and should also be cleaned.

2 In Punta Arenas

- 2.1 Your equipment, boots and clothing will be checked by our staff before your flight and if necessary, you will be asked to clean them again before departure.
- 2.2 Equipment, such as steam cleaners, will be available for those who need them.
- 2.3 Certain food products, such as uncertified poultry, must not be taken to Antarctica to reduce the chances of introducing diseases.

3 Visits to Wildlife Areas in Antarctica

- 3.1 As far as possible, avoid walking in organic material such as guano, seal placenta or seal feces, in order to avoid moving this material between sites.
- 3.2 Before moving from one site to another, scrub the sole of your boot in the snow to remove as much material as possible. If there is a simple brush scrubber, use this to clean the welts in the sole. Check that other equipment, such as camera tripods and backpacks, are clean.
- 3.3 Do not feed wildlife.
- 3.4 Do not eat near bird or seal colonies and watch out for scavengers such as South Polar Skuas.
- 3.5 Protect camp food caches and garbage so that scavengers cannot get at them.

Biosecurity Self-Audit Check List

Use the following points as a **Biosecurity Self-Audit Check List** before you leave for Antarctica:

- Have you inspected all of your clothing for soil, seeds and insects? Especially cuffs, Velcro strips, pockets, seams, headwear and jacket hoods.
- Have you emptied, vacuumed and inspected the inside of any bags that you plan to take to Antarctica to check that you are not carrying any soil, seeds or insects?
- Is all your equipment and luggage clean and free of soil and seeds? This includes walking sticks, ski poles, skis and camera tripods or other equipment.
- Have you scrubbed your footwear to remove all soil and organic material, especially if you have been walking on farmland?
- Do you understand that you need to repeat the **Biosecurity Self-Audit Check** procedure before each new site you visit in Antarctica?
- Share this information with others and if you see anything which causes you concern please speak to one of our team in Punta Arenas or Antarctica.

