



Biosecurity Procedures

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1. Introduction

These procedures aim to help Board members, staff, and operators working for the Board to identify key biosecurity risks pertinent to the internal drainage district and the Board's activities, and identify measures to address these risks.

Accidentally spreading invasive non-native species may be harmful to the environment and potentially damaging to the reputation of the Board, compromising its ability to operate, or work with partners. Operators visiting a site where an invasive non-native species is known to be present, should take measures to ensure they do not spread it. Failure to do so can risk prosecution under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

2. Objectives

- Increase awareness around invasive non-native species via training.
- Identify, and keep a record of, known areas where invasive non-native species are an issue.
- Ensure effective cleaning of equipment, machinery, and clothes.
- Ensure operators take care to avoid transporting water and material between water bodies where a risk has been identified.
- Ensure ongoing monitoring of invasive non-native species when undertaking operations.
- Remain vigilant when undertaking operations to identify any further areas where invasive non-native species exist.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Awareness

The Operational & Technical Manager will have oversight of biosecurity, disseminate information, and report on these matters.

The Board's staff will be encouraged to seek information on invasive non-native species and biosecurity practices. The Environment Agency and Non-native Species Secretariat have relevant useful information.

If a risk is identified then the operator concerned or contractor should be made aware of the priority invasive non-native species, with specific attention to aquatic and riparian species of concern and those known to be present in the surrounding area. Training for staff and operatives shall be provided as appropriate, and information will be disseminated through toolbox talks, workshops, leaflets, emails etc. Contractors should be asked to confirm that they have similar arrangements in place.

Signage, species alerts/information sheets, or guidance should be in place, making operators aware of the risks, and providing advice on how to prevent spread.

3.2. Monitoring

Operators should be vigilant in the field for invasive non-native species and have an appropriate mechanism for recording and reporting sightings of suspected species, location, and relevant details.

New sightings should be reported to the Operational & Technical Manager, and other authorities and/or land managers as appropriate. The PlantTracker app (www.planttracker.org.uk/), available free for Apple and Android devices, shows you how to identify invasive non-native plant species and enables you to easily submit geo-located photos whenever you find one.

3.3. Planning works

Biosecurity should be taken into consideration alongside other factors, such as health and safety, when planning operations and standard working procedures.

The risk of spreading invasive water-borne non-native species can be reduced by reducing the contact time in which equipment is exposed to the water. This is particularly important for items such as trailers, which have cavities that may retain water and be hard to inspect.

Propagules are small bits of plant that become detached and give rise to a new plant. Working practices that either reduce, or contain and remove, propagules should be encouraged where practicable, especially in regard to mechanical vegetation control.

3.4. Cleaning

Decontamination is an essential process to be carried out prior to leaving a site where invasive species are present. This ensures that any foreign matter remains on the land/watercourse of origin, rather than taking it to another location.

Where it is not possible to conduct the decontamination prior to leaving the land/watercourse where the work was conducted (e.g. steam cleaning larger equipment), the operation should be carried out immediately afterwards at the depot or another secure site before the next operation.

Where a cross contamination risk has been identified any field team moving from a contaminated site should carry a 'disinfection box'. This should contain an appropriate commercial disinfectant, a spray bottle, cloths or sponges, a scrubbing brush and protective gloves.

On completion of a field operation, for situations where cross contamination is identified as a risk, the following principles apply:

- Visually inspect all tools, equipment and machinery that has come into contact with the water for evidence of attached plant or animal material, or adherent mud or debris.
- Remove any attached or adherent material before leaving the site of operation.
- Washing/hosing with water will be sufficient to remove debris from most tools, equipment and machinery. Use hot water where possible.
- Ensure that all water is drained from any water retaining compartments, outboard motors, tanks and other equipment before transportation elsewhere.

A high pressure washer or steam cleaner may be essential for more difficult stains or soil, paying particular attention to the tyres, tracks and undercarriage of vehicles and buckets, hulls, outboard motors and submerged parts of machinery. High-pressure steam cleaning, with water >40°C, is recommended for larger equipment, excavators, boats, trailers, and outboard motors that are being moved from one watercourse to another.

Clothing and PPE should be visually inspected and any attached vegetation or debris removed. Soiled clothing and PPE should be removed for laundering and boots scrubbed clean; hands and other body parts may also need cleaning.

Finally, decontamination by spraying on a commercial disinfectant at the recommended strength to the cleaned boots, tools, equipment or machinery will ensure any remaining disease agents or pests are destroyed.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the decontamination process is a public exercise and where appropriate tactfully brought to the attention of the land owner or manager at the appropriate time. It is not just a question of doing the right thing but also being seen to be doing it. In this way, public confidence will be maintained in flood and water level management operations.