

A9 Dualling Perth to Inverness

Guidance Note 3: BIOSECURITY – Background and good practice for site visits and site activities

CONTEXT

Good biosecurity practice refers to a way of working that minimises the risk of contamination and the spread of animal and plant pests and diseases, parasites and non-native species.

Incidences where poor biosecurity has contributed towards country-wide outbreaks are well documented. The 2001 foot and mouth outbreak caused a crisis in British agriculture and tourism; seeing 2,000 cases of the disease in farms across most of the British countryside. Over 10 million sheep and cattle were killed.

This guidance is for general use, and sets out simple good practice instructions that can help you prevent the accidental transfer of pests, disease and non-native species.

It is designed to help identify and minimise risks; it cannot cover every eventuality and in some situations complying with additional specific requirements will be required. In such circumstances you should consider the risk and take reasonable precautions to maintain satisfactory biosecurity.

WHY CARRY OUT BIOSECURITY PRACTICES?

You cannot always see disease causing agents, plant pests, parasites and non-native species. While undertaking field activities, you or your contractors can pick them up and carry them on clothing and footwear, and on vehicles and equipment, to other locations.

A major outbreak can also impact significantly on your work if your movement into and around the countryside is restricted, and your field activities are stopped.

WHERE IS BIOSECURITY RELEVANT?

Biosecurity is important when you enter/ are close to any farmland, water bodies (rivers, burns, lochs, lochans), nature reserves and designated sites, or other premises where there is a risk of spreading pests or disease.

This includes all agricultural land (including grassland and arable/ horticultural crops), farm steadings, hill ground, moorland and woodland that carries stock.

Biosecurity can sometimes be viewed as a burden and, in certain cases, it does involve extra work. However, this guidance demonstrates that for most low risk visits very little extra effort is required. This guidance should help you decide the appropriate level of biosecurity control you will need to carry out.

RISK OF PEST AND DISEASE SPREAD

The risk of spreading pests or disease between different locations is influenced by:

- The extent and reason for the visit
- The type of premises/ area visited
- The proximity to watercourses, fisheries, crops, livestock or areas where livestock have access
- Whether there are any current pests or diseases present or restrictions applied to premises.

A9 Design Teams' survey staff, and their contractors, will need to enter rural land, nature reserves, designated nature conservation sites, and premises and areas adjacent to, and within, waterbodies and watercourses during their field activities, and collectively will carry out tasks that present differing risks of spreading pests or disease.

If a biosecurity threat and/ or incident is identified then each A9 Dualling Design Team organisation will ensure that all survey staff are made aware, and given appropriate instructions, via their own internal communications procedures. Similarly, should field survey staff be made aware of local biosecurity threats/

incidents whilst on site, this must be communicated as soon as possible to enable appropriate wider dissemination.

PLANNING YOUR FIELD ACTIVITY

It is good practice to discuss your visit with the occupier or land manager beforehand, particularly if you will be in areas with livestock. When planning your visit:

- Advise the landowner/ occupier that we have a biosecurity guidance note in place, and provide a copy of this guidance note if requested
- Try to clarify the following before your visit:
 - Does the landowner/ estate have their own biosecurity policy that you must adhere to? (some landowners may want to know where you have been in the previous 24 hours)
 - Are the premises under any restrictions for access/ movement? (perhaps due to agricultural/ livestock disease concerns)
 - Where are livestock located?
 - What parking facilities exist, and are they located away from watercourses? (so that runoff from any required washing is not an issue)
 - Will water be available? (carry a sufficient supply in vehicles for washing boots and equipment)

FIELD SURVEYS

Field survey teams will be required to carry a 'biosecurity kit' in their vehicles. The kit will include, as a minimum, a water container, concentrated disinfectant (e.g. Virkon or similar), stiff brush, and a basin/ bucket large enough to take a boot.

In certain cases, the use of bleach may be necessary to prevent cross-contamination (to be determined by the lead surveyor, e.g. for eDNA great crested newt surveys). Any cleaning with bleach needs to be conducted away from watercourses to prevent contamination.

Where field survey teams are made aware of specific biosecurity risks/ outbreaks, disposable footwear covers and spare outer clothing may also be required.

If visiting multiple sites over the course of a day, be particularly vigilant about removing excess mud and vegetative material during the survey and before moving onto the next site. Consider whether cleaning/ disinfecting of footwear/clothing/ equipment is required between sites.

This is especially true where you are moving between landholdings or where you will be accessing a designated nature conservation site, e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or National Nature Reserve (NNR) site¹, or where a biosecurity risk has been identified.

Arriving clean not only gives the right impression, but reduces the risk of you spreading threats.

CLEAN, CHECK, DRY

Be vigilant in aquatic situations. All equipment (e.g. boats, nets, sampling containers) and clothing (e.g. waders) that have made contact with the water should be checked and cleaned of any vegetative material, excess mud and aquatic organisms.

This is especially important if you are travelling between water bodies.

Pay particular attention to seams which may retain debris and associated organisms for longer periods of time.

¹ Including River Tay SAC, Shingle Islands SAC/ SSSI, Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC, Tulach Hill and Glen Fender Meadows SAC, Tulach Hill SSSI, Aldclune and Inverack Meadows SSSI, Forest of Clunie SPA/ SSSI, Cairngorms Massif SPA, Glen Garry SSSI, Drumochter Hills SAC/ SPA/ SSSI, River Spey SAC/ SSSI, River Spey-Insh Marshes SPA/ Ramsar/ SSSI, Insh Marshes SAC/ NNR, Alvie SSSI, Craigellachie NNR/ SSSI, Kinveachy Forest SAC/ SPA/ SSSI, Loch Vaa SAC/ SSSI, Slochd SAC

ARRIVE CLEAN, LEAVE CLEAN

Personal Biosecurity

Surveyors will adhere to the following procedures with regards to biosecurity:

- All surveyors will be briefed in the principles of hygiene and disease security by the survey lead.
- Surveyors will ensure that clothing and footwear is appropriately cleaned and disinfected before arriving on the land and when leaving.
- Disinfectant (e.g. Virkon, or similar) will be carried by all surveyors in order to disinfect boots and waterproof clothing prior to accessing private land.
This will involve scrubbing boots if dirty/ muddy and spraying boots/ waterproof clothing below knee level with disinfectant which has been diluted to the recommended concentration.
- All surveyors will follow biosecurity advice given to them by individual landowners.
(If such advice is contrary to A9 Design Team organisations' standard practices then surveyors will politely leave site and contact their relevant line managers for advice).
- Surveyors will not approach livestock or come into direct contact with animals on site.

Equipment Biosecurity

- Restrict the equipment taken onto site; take only what you need.
- Ensure that any equipment and machinery being used is clean and free of excess mud and vegetative material. Remember, clean and well-maintained equipment works better and lasts longer.

Vehicle Biosecurity

- Ensure that vehicles are cleaned of accumulated vegetative matter and excess mud/ soil on a regular basis (at least once a week). Ensure vehicle cleaning is undertaken away from watercourses.
- Pay special attention to wheels, wheel arches and mudguards, where such materials are likely to accumulate.
- Consider where you park the vehicle, and ideally park off site if you can.
- Where you cannot park off site, try to park on a hard standing and avoid any areas of contamination, for example, run-off from livestock pens, slurry and so on, or areas where livestock can access.
- If using an off-road vehicle, try to avoid driving through fields that have, or have recently had, livestock in them or where manure or slurry has been recently spread.

Wherever possible leave excess mud and vegetative fragments at their place of origin.

This might not always be possible on remote reserves or fragmented sites but a handy stick can be used almost anywhere to clean off the worst excesses.

KEY GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Biosecurity Guidance for Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARS) staff:

<http://www.sears.scotland.gov.uk/DocumentView.aspx?id=133>

Biosecurity Guidance for Biological Surveyors/Samplers (Draft)

- A Good Practice Guide to minimising the risk of moving non-native species, parasites and diseases:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=275>

Forestry Commission Biosecurity Policy:

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf/\\$file/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf/$file/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf)

Information on Invasive Species in Scotland:

<http://www.invasivespeciesscotland.org.uk/invasive-species/>

Non-Native Species (NNS) Biodiversity in the Field Guidance:

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org//index.cfm?pageid=174>

[RSPB Land Management Code of Practice E10: Biosecurity on and off reserves](#)

[RSPB Insh Marshes Biosecurity Plan](#)

Scottish Outdoor Access Code:

<http://www.outdooraccessscotland.com/default.asp?nPageID=26>

Safe Use of Virkon:

Powder: <http://www.day-impex.co.uk/downloads/DI%20Virkon%20Powder%20MSDS.pdf>

Tablets: <http://www.day-impex.co.uk/downloads/DI%20VirkonTablet%20MSDS.pdf>