

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 Industrial pressure washers and steam cleaners will be available for those needing to clean equipment and vehicles.
- 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 CHECKLIST

Complete this 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 List
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.