



Southern Cross
University

BIOSECURITY FACT SHEET

Faculty of Science
and Engineering

FIELDWORK BIOSECURITY RISKS

Nature makes Australia unique – biosecurity keeps it that way. Biosecurity protects Australian livelihoods and is vital to strengthening and supporting our environment and economy, including tourism, trade and agriculture. Any person who conducts field-based work creates a risk of introducing and/or spreading pests, weeds and diseases between locations. All professionals engaged in field-based research have a responsibility to spot, assess and manage that risk and adopt good field hygiene practices. You need to be aware of the associated biosecurity risks not only to your work but also in the environment you conduct your work such as on farms, aquaculture facilities or in wilderness areas and aquatic environments.

FIELDWORK PLANNING

- Map out project locations and their biosecurity risks in your Project Plan and identify activities that may allow for the introduction and/or spread of a pest, weed or disease and ensure that the appropriate hygiene practices are implemented.
 - Investigate the current status of pests and/or diseases in the fieldwork locations and how to mitigate risks associated with these (specific procedures may already be developed for particular activities).
 - Avoid high-risk sites and periods (e.g. when weeds are seeding) and use lower risk methods and equipment.
 - If relevant, consult with landowners or land managers to identify hazards (e.g. current or previous quarantines and/or any zoning of note) and hygiene protocols that may apply, especially if within a state forest or national park.
 - If visiting multiple sites, plan fieldwork according to the level of biosecurity risk (e.g. visit the nil/lowest risk sites first). Where possible, known or high-risk sites should be visited as a separate event.
 - Where possible, locate field sites near access roads to avoid on-site vehicle movement.
- Landowners and land managers may have a vehicle on-site to transport researchers to their sites.
- Adhere to and observe farm biosecurity visitor signage and record details/contacts.
 - Identify and stay on formed and sealed roads where possible to minimise spread of weeds and disease.
 - Assess the conditions at each field site to determine whether they impact hygiene requirements (e.g. muddy sites may require more thorough cleaning).
 - Schedule fieldwork to ensure time is available to conduct hygiene requirements.
 - Ensure the appropriate field cleaning equipment is available with adequate supplies.
 - Stay up to date with relevant biosecurity protocols on biosecurity websites pertaining to your research and field site locations. For example; Plant Health Australia, Animal Health Australia, State Department websites.
 - Foster a good biosecurity work culture through raising awareness amongst colleagues and the public.

Pests and diseases are spread by transporting contaminated water, mud, soil, plant material, or by transferring infected animals. Carrying mud, debris, seeds and water (even droplets) on boots, equipment and vehicle/trailer tyres are typical causes of spread.





GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING BIOSECURITY RISKS

1. Follow the 'check, clean, dry and disinfect' protocol when conducting field-based research.

This applies to clothing, footwear, equipment, tools, vehicles, vessels and trailers, and should be done before departure and at each site at the end of fieldwork. Always check relevant websites and consult with landowners or land managers for any biosecurity considerations for your field sites.

Check – thoroughly check all fieldwork gear and equipment for mud, soil, seeds, algae and other plant material.

Clean – remove all mud, soil and debris. Vehicle wash facilities may be required for heavy soiling (e.g. self-service, drive through).

Dry – where possible, fieldwork gear should be completely dry before using in another area.

Disinfect – if unable to completely dry or if you are working in a known risk area, disinfect fieldwork gear and equipment with an appropriate solution. Do not let run-off containing potential pests and diseases or cleaning detergents/disinfectants enter waterways.

2. Ensure all team members comply

All fieldworkers have a responsibility to adhere to biosecurity instructions and protocols. The fieldwork leader is responsible for ensuring that all team members understand the risks and comply. Involving the team in determining the biosecurity measures can assist with compliance.

3. Report suspected biosecurity threats

If staff/students observe suspected prohibited or notifiable pests or diseases while undertaking fieldwork, they are required to report these to the relevant agency and the University. Never assume that it has already been reported.

Exotic Plant Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881 (plant or bee pests and diseases).

Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline: 1800 675 888 (livestock, wildlife and aquatic animals)

Report invasive marine species to the Department of Agriculture or Primary Industries in the state or territory in which it was found.

EXAMPLES OF CLEANING AND DISINFECTING EQUIPMENT

- Vehicle wash facilities
- Access to freshwater – may need large containers of bottles of potable freshwater
- Hoses, spray bottles, buckets
- Stiff brushes, scrapers or sponges (may need a variety to suit equipment used)
- Plastic foot baths with a suitable solution
- Plastic tubs or buckets or heavy-duty rubbish bags and ties to contain fieldwork gear
- Gloves, safety glasses or other PPE
- Hand sanitiser or hand wash
- Detergent and/or disinfectant solutions (dependent on fieldwork gear and biosecurity risk)



Footbath with Sporekill and boot brush



Wheel pressure spray kit



Cloth hat and bag that can be laundered