

# Don't Pack a Pest

## DECONTAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR SMALL BOAT OPERATIONS

While there is presently no conclusive evidence that tourists have introduced or transmitted diseases or any alien material in Antarctica, there is indirect and circumstantial evidence that raises concern. Furthermore, there is an acknowledged potential for visitors to be vectors of disease, both into and within the Antarctic ecosystem.

The Antarctic tourism industry, on its own initiative, began implementing procedures to address the possible introduction of alien species into Antarctica as early as 1999. In addition, IAATO commissioned a study designed to identify effective mitigation measures. As a result of these initiatives the following guidelines have been developed.

The guidelines are similar to the decontamination practices of those countries which protect themselves against the introduction of external diseases or alien organisms, and have been mandatory on all IAATO member vessels since 2001. The guidelines are regularly reviewed and updated as new information becomes available.

*Please note:* the term 'visitors' refers to all ship's crew, boat drivers, staff, guides and lecturers as well as to passengers.



### Pre-Voyage Information

- Advise visitors that Antarctica is largely free of introduced diseases and non-native species. **We all have a responsibility to ensure it stays that way.**
- Advise visitors that their footwear, clothing and equipment must be cleaned thoroughly to remove all foreign material before joining the vessel. Check tripod feet, backpacks and all velcro attachments on clothing and equipment for mud and plant material.

### Before Landing

- Remind visitors that seeds and other materials can be easily transported to and around Antarctica. **Be vigilant.**
- Remind visitors that their boots, clothing and equipment must be clean before going ashore. Facilities for cleaning, such as boot-washing stations, will be available.
- Visitor clothing and equipment should be checked by a member of the ship's staff or crew prior to the first landing.
- Turn clothing pockets out for vacuuming by staff if appropriate.

### Boot-Washing Station

This is a facility on the deck, at the head of the gangway, or close to where passengers board the ship. It requires:

- Running water and a hose – preferably high pressure to ensure complete removal of debris.
- Scrubbing brush and/or coarse mat and shallow tray in which all debris can be scrubbed from boots and clothing.
- A second tray of water with disinfectant such as **Virkon S**<sup>1</sup>.
- A member of staff or crew to assist visitors to inspect their boots and clothing for complete decontamination.



- Before and after each landing all visitors going ashore must walk through the boot-washing station and ensure that boots are free of debris and disinfected.
- Boat crews may board via a different route to their passengers and should ensure they also complete the decontamination process.

### Landings

- Avoid walking in concentrations of organic material such as guano and seal faeces where possible.
- Before boarding the small boat to return to the ship, debris – especially organic matter such as guano – should be washed off boots and clothing as much as possible. A simple brush scrubber at the landing site should be used to clean boots before entering the Zodiac (or other small boat landing craft) at the end of the landing period. Do not forget to clean the debris off the brushes before returning to the ship. Ensure that whatever touched the ground (backpacks in particular), boot cuffs, or exposed velcro are inspected and cleaned before leaving the landing site.
- On returning to the ship, boots, clothing and equipment must be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected at the boot-washing station. The disinfectant should not be rinsed off, but allowed to dry thoroughly between landings.
- At the end of each landing, small boats should be inspected, and when necessary cleaned, to ensure that no foreign material is transported between sites.



### Between Landings

- Every effort must be made to ensure that boots and clothing dry out completely between landings. (Desiccation is an important mode of controlling some micro-organisms). Visitors should be reminded in subsequent pre-landing briefings to inspect their boots and clothing to ensure that they are clean and no foreign material is present.



<sup>1</sup>Virkon S is currently perceived by the Antarctic community, including IAATO, as being the most effective disinfectant for use at boot washing stations. Be aware that Virkon S requires special handling. It is important to follow instructions for use carefully.

For the purposes of this information small boat is defined as a Zodiac, RIB, Naiad, Avon, Polarcircle or similar small landing craft.