

Open Spaces Department Biosecurity Protocol

Site:

Where this protocol applies:

All City of London Open Spaces, or distinct areas within an open space, where biosecurity is in the interest of protecting sensitive flora populations and where it is practically enforceable (from here on referred to as 'The Site'). This would exclude areas where there is no practical way of controlling the flow of visitor access, e.g. City Gardens.

Who this applies to:

Contractors – All contractors that are likely to access any areas of the Site (unless access is limited to hard surface roads, car parks, yards, office area and lodges) should disinfect when they sign in at the office. Any equipment should also be disinfected.

Site visitors – All professionals and volunteers from other countryside sites, colleges on guided walks, training groups, general guided walks including those for members of the public (unless access is limited to hard surface roads, etc – as above), should disinfect prior to their walk or when they leave the office for their site visit. For groups meeting at any other location away from the office, disinfecting should be done at the meeting point.

Staff and volunteers – All staff and volunteers should be encouraged to disinfect their boots after visiting other green spaces or to have foot wear that they use for the Site alone. At the least they should ensure that foot wear and clothing is clean. It may not be practical to disinfect when transferring between the Site and areas immediately adjacent, however cleaning footwear between the two is desirable.

What to clean/disinfect

Boots and clothing – ensure all clothing and boots are clear of mud, leaves and pine needles before arriving at the Site and boots disinfected as below.

Equipment – to include all equipment and vehicles to be in contact with the soil or vegetation whether hired, borrowed or used by contractors or visitors– digging equipment, chippers, vehicles, hand tools, chainsaws, surveying equipment (e.g. tape measures) that will be in contact with trees or vegetation

All are to be clear of mud, leaves and pine needles before arriving at the Site and disinfected as below.

Clothes, Boots or equipment/vehicles soiled with mud leaves or pine needles should be refused access and sent away to be cleaned before returning for disinfection

When?

Every time – staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors that are likely to have visited other sites between their visits to the Site may cause cross contamination – it is unlikely you can ever be sure that anyone returning to the Site over a period of days will not be contaminated from other locations – if in doubt insist on disinfection each time the person or equipment arrives at the Site

Process for implementing biosecurity to contractors, guided walks and site visits

When the contract is issued or the arrangements made for the work/visit to be made the following information should be included:

“This Site operates an active biosecurity policy. When you arrive, your footwear will be disinfected. For this reason please ensure that your boots are clean and free from mud or vegetation.

If you will be using vehicles off tarmac roads or any equipment this will also need to be disinfected and so should be clean when you arrive.

Please co-operate with staff requests and be aware that if you do not have clean footwear, vehicles or equipment you may not be allowed to continue your work."

Staff protocol for dealing with contractors

- Where possible limit their access, e.g. to hard surfaced areas only
- Avoid driving vehicles off hard surfaced roads
- Advise contractors of requirements before they arrive at the Site
- Disinfectant and equipment required is stored in the chemical safe [Location:.....] and is marked as TREE BIO in 5ltr or 1ltr pump sprayers.
- Disinfectant should be applied to run off point

Staff protocol for dealing with visitors on guided walks and volunteers

- As a general principle, try to raise the issue of biosecurity with visitors and especially regular attendees and volunteers.
- Ideally encourage attendees to wear clean footwear by telling them before a guided walk or event if possible (e.g. via booking system).
- Try to find an opportunity within the event to explain to attendees about the biosecurity protocol and what they can do to help (in general).
- If possible disinfect boots of volunteers before they start work. If they regularly work on other conservation sites this should be actively encouraged. Apply disinfectant to run off point, this may mean taking the smaller pump spray to the starting point of the walk/event. (Try to avoid taking all sprays so that there is always one left for contractors if needed).
- Volunteers' vehicles should not normally need to go off tarmac roads. If they are needed off road they should be disinfected beforehand as for contractors vehicles.

Staff protocol for staff

Staff should be encouraged to think about their clothing and especially footwear. If possible:

- Clean footwear between using it in different locations
- Disinfect footwear when arriving at work when it has been worn elsewhere
- Try to have separate footwear for work and leisure
- Ensure the clothes you wear to work are not dirty from other sites.
- It is not realistic to disinfect between the Site and those immediately adjacent, but be aware of the possibility of carrying diseases between the two. Ideally clean foot wear between sites, especially if it gets particularly muddy. Clean vehicles if they go between sites and have been off road and are muddy.

Opportunities should be taken to discuss this policy with members of the public, volunteers etc. and to explain why it is important and to encourage acceptance and buy in. This should be done verbally and in relevant site literature (volunteer hand-outs, site noticeboards, etc).

While it is not possible for us to disinfect all visitors to the Site, it would be advantageous if as many as possible operated their own biosecurity policy (cleaning boots between sites for example).

Further guidance on biosecurity

For staff use and for circulation to anyone who requests further information.

Background

In recent years there have been increasing numbers of tree diseases found in the UK and some of these have the capability to kill large numbers of trees. The need to disinfect boots and clothing is well established for those people moving between farms on a regular basis and we are relatively familiar with the sight of foot washes to control animal diseases. For some time now, tree focussed organisations (such as the Royal Forestry Society and the Ancient Tree Forum) have operated a biosecurity system for field visits in order to try and prevent the spread of tree and plant diseases. This is likely to become more evident in the future as the horticultural industry picks up on the issue. Although biosecurity may be seen as something exceptional at the moment, in the future it will become main stream. The relatively recent discovery of the disease that kills ash trees in the UK has brought some of these issues higher up the agenda of land managers and nature reserves. However this is just one of many different diseases that have the potential to infect and kill trees as well as other flora and fauna and they are spread by different agents. Disinfecting footwear and cleaning clothes will not stop the spread of some diseases but for others it may be a significant deterrent.

The main precaution is for visitors, contractors and staff to have footwear, clothing, tools, equipment and vehicles clear of mud, leaves and needles before arriving at the Site and then to spray or dip with disinfectant on arrival.

It is not realistic to disinfect every single visitor but widespread take up should be encouraged.

This protocol does not include visitors/contractors to the yard area, office and lodges only.

Footwear

Before arriving at the Site

Footwear must be clean and free from soil and plant debris before arrival, if footwear is dirty on arrival the following process must be applied.

- Footwear must be washed off using a stiff brush and water. It is essential that all traces of soil be removed.
- The brush for this must be kept on site in a bucket of disinfectant.
- After cleaning, footwear must be sprayed with Propeller or Vikon and left until it has evaporated.
- Care must be taken to ensure that any water run-off does not enter watercourses

Clothing

Needles and leaves can get stuck in and on clothing.

Before arriving at the Site

- Needles and debris on clothing must be shaken out or brushed off before leaving the site or getting into a vehicle.
- Check inside footwear, hoods, outer pockets and collars. Remember to check any protective equipment such as helmets, ear-defenders, felling gloves and protective over-trousers.
- Wet clothing **MUST** be changed before moving between sites. Wet clothing must be bagged and laundered before re-use, or washed down and disinfected. The use of waterproof outer clothing and leggings will help with this precaution.

Tools

Hand tools and motorised tools used for cutting and digging must be cleaned of mud and debris before arriving at the Site and will then be disinfected on arrival

- If any work (e.g. pruning) is to be carried out on a tree or shrub, tools must be 'flamed or disinfected **before** being used - Propeller or Vikon disinfectant may be applied and left to evaporate.
- Chainsaw bars, chains and side covers must be removed and cleaned as thoroughly as possible to remove debris. Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, Propeller or Vikon disinfectant may be applied and left to evaporate.
- Other hand tools and equipment such as tapes, cant hooks, wedges, fuel cans, tools and toolboxes must be cleaned off and surfaces brushed with disinfectant before being moved onto site

Vehicles, lorries and machines

Special care should be taken to ensure that vehicle and machinery tyres and lorry beds are free of loose soil, mud and debris before arriving at the Site.

Before entering any part of the Site

- Consider whether the vehicle needs to enter the site at all. If you can, park off site and walk in
- Share vehicles wherever possible to reduce the number of vehicles that need to enter the site.
- When on site, vehicles should stay on Tarmac surfaced roads wherever possible

Before arriving at the Site

- Machines, plant and any road vehicles must be cleaned. A pressure washer should be used, preferably one that uses hot water or steam.
- This cleaning should focus on removing as much mud and needle debris as possible focusing on tyres, wheels, mud flaps, sills, wheel arches, guarded areas and anywhere else where mud and needle debris may have accumulated. Cab floors and pedals should also be checked and cleaned.
- On arrival at the Site, tyres, blades, buckets etc. should be disinfected with Propeller or Vikon disinfectant

Disinfectants

- Disinfectants used should be either Propeller or Vikon. **Note that disinfectants are NOT effective on soiled surfaces and that broad-spectrum farm disinfectants are not effective against *Phytophthora*.**
- Disinfectants can be applied from a spraying bottle or from a purpose made spray. They can also be used in a mat form (sponge in a tray impregnated with disinfectant) which people walk through and this may be the easiest for large groups. Disinfectants should be stored in the chemical store at the agreed location.
- Note that there should always be a 5L spray bottle with chemical in and at least two 1L bottles. Should you empty a bottle it is your responsibility to make up more, order more or tell your line manager. It is also your responsibility to ensure that bottles are clearly marked, and to reinforce any labelling that is getting too faint to see.