



BIOSECURITY PROTOCOLS 2015

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**For the Attention of all visitors to South Georgia
& the South Sandwich Islands**

To protect the fragile ecology of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, it is essential that all visitors understand fully the biosecurity protocols, which they must implement before arriving into the Territory and during the course of their visit. Ultimately all the biosecurity regulations are underpinned by legislation. Failure to adhere to these regulations is an offence, which is likely to result in prosecution.

Why is biosecurity in South Georgia particularly important?

The climate in South Georgia is changing rapidly. Glaciers are retreating at an alarming rate and milder conditions mean that the Territory has never been more vulnerable to biosecurity threats resulting from human actions. The accidental or reckless introduction of any alien plant or animal species (including micro-organisms), or the transfer of such a species between landing sites is now far more likely to result in an alien species becoming successfully established and this poses an extremely serious risk to the Territory's fragile ecology.

The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) have completed a project to remove invasive reindeer from the Barff Peninsula and Busen area and the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT), with support from GSGSSI, have completed the baiting phase of a habitat restoration project to eradicate rats and mice from South Georgia. With the support of the UK Government Darwin Initiative, GSGSSI is also undertaking a cutting edge weed management project. Eradication projects on this scale are unprecedented and, if successful, will transform the ecology of the island and restore the habitats of a great number of native species.

The careless actions of one individual or organisation leading to the inadvertent introduction of an alien species South Georgia could undermine these amazing initiatives and could lead to a prosecution under the Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance (2011). In particular, the reintroduction of a rat or mouse would be a catastrophic event for the future ecology of the island would likely result in heavy financial penalties for the individual or vessel operator responsible.

Every visitor has a valuable role and contribution to make in protecting this unique territory. Visitors are required to follow the biosecurity measures at all times and remain vigilant reporting any concerns immediately to Expedition Staff or the Government Officers.

Please read the following document carefully and rigorously follow all instructions.

Biosecurity protocols

Roles and responsibilities

- Every visitor is required to protect South Georgia from invasive species and complete the biosecurity protocols outlined below.
- All persons going ashore will be required to sign a declaration before landing. The Government Officer will inspect these.
- The Visit Permit holder on cruise ships and yachts (normally the Expedition Leader on cruise ships) should vigilantly ensure that all passengers, staff and any crew landing complete biosecurity processes.
- On merchant vessels, MOD vessels and fishing vessels, the Master or another senior officer must be responsible for overseeing biosecurity procedures.
- In the event that a vessel is permitted to undertake landings prior to arriving at King Edward Point, the permit holder must contact the Government Officer to confirm that all persons going ashore have completed this process and signed the declaration.
- Under the Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance 2011 and any subsidiary legislation, any biosecurity breach may be treated as a criminal offence. Visit Permit holders should refer to this legislation in advance of their arrival (available on GSGSSI website www.sgisland.gs)
- All visiting vessels must have South Georgia Biosecurity information on display in a public area. Information sheets will be provided to vessels at the start of the season and also in each passenger's South Georgia visitor booklet.

Before arrival

- Prior to arrival at South Georgia all luggage and equipment to be brought ashore (such as daypacks and camera bags), must be thoroughly inspected and cleaned.
- Special attention should be paid to Velcro®, footwear, gaiters, pockets, turnups in trousers and hoods of jackets (pockets to be turned inside out).
- Daypacks and camera bags must be brushed out and vacuumed to remove all soil, seeds and organic material before disembarking at South Georgia.
- Bootwashing with biocide (e.g. Virkon®) is obligatory for all passengers, staff and crew prior to **all** landings and again when returning to the ship. Bootwashing must be overseen by a designated competent member of staff / crew. All external surfaces of any footwear, which will be worn ashore, must be washed. (Virkon® concentration required is 35g per 10ltrs of water).
- Government Officers will randomly inspect bootwashing facilities and procedures on visiting vessels (including yachts) and may also randomly inspect visitors, including staff, as they come ashore to ensure biosecurity protocols have been undertaken properly.

Going ashore

- Only open boats such as Zodiacs and RIBs may be used to land passengers on the shoreline and beaches (i.e. any landing other than at the jetties at King Edward Point, Grytviken and Bird Island).
- All boats must be thoroughly inspected for rodents and any organic material before embarking passengers and again when departing from the island to return to the ship.
- No 'loose cargo' should be landed (such as loose items in open bags or nets). All cargo should be inspected, boxed and sealed before landing.
- Bags should not be left open and unattended ashore. This includes any bags used by the vessel staff during the landing, such as those used to store lifejackets.
- Visitors should avoid putting day sacks or camera cases down on the ground as this increases the likelihood of biological material becoming entrained and transferred between sites.

- Fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs and unpasteurised dairy produces are not be taken ashore.
- Any food brought ashore must be in boxes that are robust, fully sealed and with no openings. Boxes should be made from and either plastic, metal or wood.

Between every landing

- Different areas on South Georgia are biologically unique and it is important not to move material between regions. As well as potentially spreading alien plant species to un-invaded sites, incorrect cleaning of clothing and footwear has the potential to spread disease between colonies of seals and penguins that would otherwise not come into close contact.
- Bootwashing facilities to be cleaned and refilled for each new landing. For this to remain effective, passengers and staff returning from the shore should wash off soil and organic material with seawater before embarking on the Zodiac / launch to return to the ship.
- Visitors must inspect clothing, luggage and equipment between landings and repeat biosecurity checks/cleaning procedures to minimise the risk of intra-regional transfer.

Bait stations and rat guards

- All visiting vessels must deploy bait stations in areas likely to harbour rats. These will be provided and placed by the Government Officer at King Edward Point at the first call of the season.



Figure 1. Example of a rodent bait station and wax bait blocks

- Subsequently, bait stations should be checked by the permit holder 24h before arrival into South Georgia and the Government Officers should be informed by e-mail to say this has been done. *Please ask passengers, officers and crew not to disturb or tamper with the boxes at other times.*
- Bait should be replaced if it has deteriorated since the last check. Bait will deteriorate more rapidly in wet locations than in dry (indoor) sites. Old bait blocks should be disposed of by incineration or in landfill – do not throw them overboard if birds might scavenge them.

Rat Poison Information

The poison contains 0.005% Difenacoum

Avoid contact with eyes and skin. Do not smoke eat or drink while handling this product. Wash hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking.

- Ordinarily, vessels are not permitted to come alongside the jetty at King Edward Point
- Yachts (small sailing or motor vessels, with a load line length of up to 24m or less and used for pleasure cruises) may use the jetty at Tijuca but they must use serviceable rat guards on all lines ashore.
- The use of, shorelines for mooring should be avoided. If shorelines are used, serviceable rat guards should be in place.

Incident reporting

- If a rodent, reindeer or fresh evidence of either of these species (including tracks, fresh droppings) is seen anywhere on South Georgia, it is important to gather as much information as possible and report it to the Government Officers at King Edward Point.

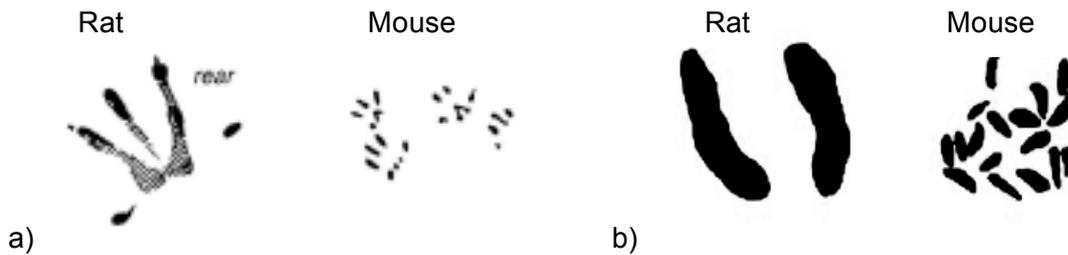


Figure 2. Comparative size of a) rat and mouse prints b) rat and mouse droppings

- If you think you have seen evidence of reindeer or rodents, the following actions should be taken:
 - Take photographs of the area including close-ups of any sign (tracks, fresh droppings, recently used rat burrows).
 - Make a note of the exact location. Ideally this should be a GPS point but if not available mark the position on a map, or make a sketch.
 - If possible, conduct a search of the surrounding area to see if any more evidence of rodents is apparent.
 - Record the time and weather conditions of the sighting.
 - Note any wildlife in the area e.g. presence of pintails, pipits.

Approved Landing Sites

For the 2015/16 season, visit permits will normally be issued for landings at **approved landing sites** subject to individual site restrictions and the applicant meeting the criteria for eligibility to land. See Code of Conduct for Prion Island (within the 2013 *Information for Visitors to South Georgia* Booklet and the separate Site Visitor Management Plan for Cape Rosa).

Visit applicants must refer to the official place names list for approved visitor sites. These are attached to the South Georgia visit application forms.

Landing at other sites is not permitted unless special permission has been granted by GSGSSI and the relevant permit issued.

Additional Information for the 2015/16 Season

Cooper Bay site closure following avian cholera outbreak

The Cooper Bay chinstrap penguin colony-landing site (and surrounding sites, with the exception of the macaroni colony) remain closed to visitors following a suspected outbreak of avian cholera in 2010. **Thorough and appropriate use of biocides is essential to prevent the spread of pathogens.** Visitors should contact GSGSSI as soon as possible if sick birds or mammals are observed in the vicinity of Cooper Bay or any other landing site.

For Administrative Use Only	
VESSEL	
DATE	
VISIT NO	

**SOUTH GEORGIA BIOSECURITY
SELF AUDIT DECLARATION**

DECLARATION: I confirm that I have carried out the preventative measures outlined overleaf, and that I have read and understood the South Georgia biosecurity information provided on board my vessel.

I have complied with these measures to the best of my ability and I acknowledge that failure to comply with these measures may result in a delay or disruption to my landing(s) on South Georgia.

No	Name (print)	Signature
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Name of EL / Officer:

Signature