

REJOICE IN MUD: JUST CLEAN IT OFF BEFORE THE NEXT ADVENTURE

BIOSECURITY



2015

Whether you're into kayaking, trout fishing, four wheel driving, orienteering, mountain biking or digging holes for fence posts, getting covered in mud, water and twigs can be a badge of honour from a great day spent outdoors.

We like the idea of getting dirty but it's not all innocent fun. Tasmania's Biosecurity Network, coordinated by NRM South, envisages a world where everyone gets a bit dirty, then checks, cleans and dries their gear each time they visit the bush and before their next adventure.

Why do we do this? Well, one of the reasons Tasmania is a wonderful place to spend time in the bush, grow amazing produce and earn a living in outdoor based jobs is its relatively pest, weed and disease-free status.

Our isolation, quarantine policies and a history of careful management have kept our environment in a near-pristine condition, free from many of the pests and pathogens that have devastated other parts of the world.

Of course we have our share of problems – gorse infestations can cost millions, feral animals harm our landscapes and wildlife, and some of our fresh waterways contain European carp – although generally speaking Tasmania is one of the 'least weedy' places in the world.

The Biosecurity Network is one of the first lines of defence. The group is made up of representatives from Biosecurity Tasmania, Inland Fisheries, DPI/PWE, the Biodiversity Monitoring Branch, State Growth, Hydro Tasmania, Forestry Tasmania, the three Tasmanian NRM organisations, the Ecological Society of Australia, and the Livestock Biosecurity Network.

We work together to deliver consistent, layered messages to people that spend time in Tasmania's wild and productive places to build a culture of good biosecurity practice.

This work is important because there are pressing threats to our environment. There's a fungus called Chytrid, already present in eastern and northern Tasmania as well as on the margins of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area that threatens to wipe out some of our native frogs, a key link in the ecological chain. A frog monitoring program undertaken in 2014, resulted in the development of the Frog Conservation Report providing information about the status of frogs in relation to this issue.

Also, knocking at our door from neighbouring New Zealand is an algae, commonly called rock snot, which chokes rivers so badly that waterway systems can effectively die. These are some of the threats we know of, but the game changer could be a weed, pest or disease we are yet to discover.

THE THREATS WE KNOW ARE A RISK BUT THE ONES WE ARE YET TO ENCOUNTER ARE A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO TWO PARTS OF THE TASMANIAN WAY OF LIFE THAT WE HOLD DEAR.

The first is our wilderness area and the natural places that underpin our tourism economy, and the second is the security of the food and agricultural systems in the state.

The Biosecurity Network shares information, undertakes training and produces materials for recreational users and to farmers about managing threats to agricultural systems.

The message is simple. We can all do our bit to ensure that Tassie continues to be a wondrous place to visit, live and work. We do this by remembering to check, clean and dry (and if we can't dry our gear, disinfect) our gear, vehicles and equipment before and after we spend time in Tassie's wild and productive places.

Luckily this doesn't mean we need to forgo the enjoyment of getting covered in mud, it just means we need to be mindful about the risks, and make sure we're sparkling clean before we do it all again.

For more information visit:
www.nrmsouth.org.au/biosecurity

