



BIOSECURITY  
FOR LIFE

# WHAT IS BIOSECURITY?



*'Biosecurity'*: preventing the spread  
of invasive non-native species



Invasive mammals like rats,  
mice and stoats can cause  
serious harm on our  
predator-free islands

**Travelling to an island?**

You can help by carrying  
out biosecurity checks!



# WHAT IS AN INVASIVE NON-NATIVE MAMMAL?

An invasive non-native species is one not naturally found in an area/on an island, which has been introduced by humans (deliberately or accidentally).

These species can include mammals such as rats, mice, stoats, feral cats, hedgehogs and mink, some of which are native to mainland UK. Introduction of these animals to our offshore islands can lead to serious environmental and economic damage.





## WHY ARE THEY A PROBLEM?

Invasive non-native mammals cause a range of problems for our environment and our day-to-day lives.

Many invasive mammals are skilled hunters and exploit the local wildlife, which has not evolved to cope with these predators. The eggs and chicks of ground-nesting birds and seabirds such as puffins are particularly vulnerable, and their populations can quickly be **decimated** by species like rats. Damage to crops, buildings and human food stores can have detrimental effects on the local economy, including farming and tourism, and affect everyday activities.

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## WHICH ISLANDS ARE AT RISK?

Many of our islands are free from at least some invasive non-native mammalian predators; even some of our inhabited islands are rat-free.

These predator-free islands are among our most important areas for breeding seabirds. Preventing the spread of invasive non-native mammals to islands is important to protect the future of the wildlife and communities that live on them.





# WHAT TO DO WHEN TRAVELLING TO AND FROM ISLANDS

## VEHICLES

Vehicles are at higher risk of harbouring stowaways when they have been sitting stationary in an area that has potential invasive mammals. Rodents are known to use cavities within the chassis and engine space to nest and sleep.

Removing potential food sources from vehicles will reduce the attraction and make it easier to check. Check for signs of stowaways during regular maintenance of your vehicle and before travelling to an island.



## BOATS

Harbours and ports are high risk for the presence of invasive mammals, especially rodents.

Rodents are inquisitive, agile and good swimmers. It is easy for them to gain access to any boat. Keeping a tidy boat and storing food in rodent proof containers will reduce the attraction for any stowaways. Consider regular checks for rodents using chew cards and keep snap traps on board to deal with any stowaways. Do not set sail for an island if you suspect stowaways may be on board. If you find a stowaway on board whilst at sea, do not throw it overboard as it could swim to a near-by island, and do not land on a predator-free island.

## BULKY CARGO

Bulky cargo, such as building materials, farm equipment, animal feed and bedding, is high risk due to its potential to transport invasive mammals to islands.

It can provide food and warmth which is very attractive to many species such as rodents, which in turn can attract stoats. Where possible transport cargo well wrapped and packed, this will make it less attractive to invasive mammals as well as being easier to check.

Store cargo off the ground in a secure building before transportation and check for signs of stowaways before loading onto a boat. Do not transport damaged bags of animal feed. If stowaways are found, such as mice in hay bales, remove all animals and signs before transporting to an island.



## BAGGAGE



Small mammals can climb into personal baggage and are more likely to do so if there is food inside.

Where possible pack your bag on the day of travel to an island and do not leave your baggage in high risk areas, such as quaysides, unattended before travel. Always check through baggage before travel and store all food in rodent proof containers to reduce the attraction. Large food orders in boxes should be checked for any damage to outer packaging. If damage is found open the package and check for stowaways, do not transport damaged food packs. Repack damaged food packs into a new box or container before travel.

## WEATHER DELAYS

Weather regularly disrupts and delays travel to islands.

When this happens biosecurity checks need to be repeated before rescheduled travel takes place. Avoid storing cargo in high risk areas such as the quayside whilst waiting for the weather to improve. Animal bedding is a particular high risk when left in poor weather as it can provide easy to access shelter for invasive non-native mammals.

## SIGNS OF STOWAWAYS



 **ENTRANCE HOLES**



 **DROPPINGS**



 **NEST MATERIAL**



 **GNAW MARKS**





# WHAT ARE WE DOING TO HELP?



We are working hard to raise awareness of the threat of invasive predators and put in place systems to prevent their accidental introduction to islands.

In particular we are focusing our efforts on 41 specially protected island areas that are designated for breeding seabirds.

**We are helping to protect these species and our islands by:**



Working with land managers and communities to implement biosecurity plans

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Developing a network of regional hubs equipped to respond rapidly to incursions

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Training personnel, deploying surveillance equipment and training a biosecurity dog

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Training marine industries and businesses to reduce the risk of the accidental introduction of predators



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Find out more at [biosecurityforlife.org.uk](https://biosecurityforlife.org.uk)

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