

Carpet sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) is present in Loch Creran

The invasive carpet sea squirt has been found and positively identified in Loch Creran. This follows unconfirmed reports received earlier this year. It is important that everyone using the loch and its locale for business or recreation is **vigilant and acts in a way which would limit its spread**.

A High Surveillance Area has been identified. It extends from Ardnamurchan Point through the Sound of Mull, Loch Linnhe, the Firth of Lorn and the northern end of the Sound of Jura to Keillmore on the Argyll mainland. Sea lochs within this area as well as the coasts of Scarba and Luing are included. Within this area people using the sea or beaches are encouraged to look out for the species and **report suspected findings immediately** to allow relevant authorities to contain and minimise its spread.

What is carpet sea squirt?

Carpet sea squirt is a highly invasive non-native species. It can reproduce rapidly and has a variety of growth forms including dense mat-like colonies and long beard-like colonies which hang from structures such as ship hulls, ropes or docks. It can survive down to depths of over 80 meters and can overwinter in a reduced form. It prefers hard substrates and is good at growing on underwater man-made structures. Download carpet sea squirt poster at <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=364>

What damage can it cause?

Carpet sea squirt has potential to have significant ecological and economic impacts. It can compete for space with native species on hard surfaces, smother shellfish and other immobile invertebrate species, and may also impact on fish spawning grounds. Fouling of man-made hard structures such as vessel hulls, aquaculture equipment, docks, moorings and support structures is common. This can prove costly to marine industries and users.

Where else is it found?

Carpet sea squirt has become established in many places throughout the world. It has been found in locations in England, Wales and Ireland and in 2009 it was recorded in Scotland for the first time in the Firth of Clyde. It was later confirmed in three more locations in the same Firth.

How is it spread?

Carpet sea squirt can be spread through hull fouling and the transfer of fouled aquaculture equipment and stock. It is most likely spread through 'budding' or fragmentation of colonies since larvae only live for a few hours in the water column. The law in Scotland makes it an offence to spread a non-native species to a new location outwith its native range, whether intentionally or otherwise.

What is being done about carpet sea squirt in Loch Creran?

A Response Team, lead by Marine Scotland, is identifying priority actions to limit its spread. So far, there is a focus on management measures, developing guidance for sectors, surveying, increasing vigilance and promoting biosecurity practices. Local interests and national representative bodies are being contacted with information.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND IT?

If you find or suspect carpet sea squirt, please report it immediately on the Scottish Environment and Rural Services (SEARS) telephone number **08452 30 20 50** or **Email: info@sears.scotland.gov.uk**.

It is helpful if you can

- Take a photo or detailed description
- Identify the location, ideally to the nearest 100 metres
- Note the date and roughly how much you saw

You can also record your sighting using the **iRecord website** or the **SeaLife Tracker app**.
<http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>
http://www.brc.ac.uk/sealife_tracker/home

People who work or visit a site regularly have a sense of what's normal and are ideally placed to spot if something is amiss. Please raise any concerns you may have.

WHAT ACTION SHOULD I TAKE TO HELP PREVENT SPREAD?

We all have a shared responsibility to help prevent spread. What action you can take will depend on the activity you are involved in e.g. marine recreation, aquaculture, fishing. For some activities there are **established codes of practice that you should follow now**.

AQUACULTURE

Non-native species: Management on Scottish Shellfish Farms

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00489824.pdf>

Shellfish guidance is being updated and finfish guidance is being developed. These will be made available on the Scottish Government website.

JETTY AND MOORINGS OPERATORS

Biosecurity guidance for submerged structures
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=568>

RECREATIONAL WATER USERS

Check Clean Dry

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org//checkcleandry/index.cfm?>

Royal Yachting Association (RYA) check list
<http://www.rya.org.uk/infoadvice/planningenvironment/advice/Pages/AdviceonAlienSpecies.aspx>

The Green Blue resources for clubs training centres and marinas

<http://thegreenblue.org.uk/Boat-Users/Antifoul-and-Invasive-Species>

IN GENERAL YOU SHOULD

- Check your equipment.
- Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothes thoroughly.
- Dry all equipment, make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere and dispose of any fouling carefully so that it doesn't go back into the water.