

Decontamination Instructions

Never visit a cave wearing gear that has been worn in another cave and has not been properly cleaned! Follow these steps to clean your gear:

Step 1: Bag It!

If you're going to be transporting dirty gear, put all gear that was in the cave in bags or sealed containers before placing it in your car. Do your best to clean yourself off before changing into clean clothes. Commercially available face and hand wipes work well. This step will go more smoothly if you have all your supplies out and ready before you go into the cave. You want to keep your clean gear accessible and ready.

Step 2: Clean It!

Soft gear / Washables

- 1) Wash all clothing and any appropriate equipment in washing machine or by hand using conventional detergents (Woolite[®] works best)
- 2) Rinse thoroughly
- 3) Soak items in one of these recommended decontaminating products:
 - Soaking in Hot Water ($\geq 131^{\circ}\text{F}$) for 20 minutes*
 - A 1:32 solution of household bleach - 4 oz. bleach per gallon of water, soak for 5 minutes
- 4) Rinse and dry

*When hot water is used, all gear must be submersed for 20 minutes. Conventional washing machines may not keep gear at high temperatures ($\geq 131^{\circ}\text{F}$) long enough to be an effective decontamination method.

Hard Gear

- 1) Clean gear well using water and soap if possible. For rugged gear, a car wash is a great place for decon! If immersing hard gear is preferred, follow solution mixtures listed above for soft gear.
- 2) Decontaminate by applying one of the recommended chemical products to the surface of the gear:
 - A spray solution or wipes containing $\geq 60\%$ isopropyl alcohol (sold as "rubbing" alcohol)
 - Hydrogen peroxide wipes (available at many pharmacies)
 - Lysol[®] Disinfecting Wipes
 - Clorox[®] Wipes
 - Clorox[®] Clean-up Cleaner Plus Bleach
- 3) Let sit for a minimum of 10 minutes
- 4) Rinse (if possible) and air dry

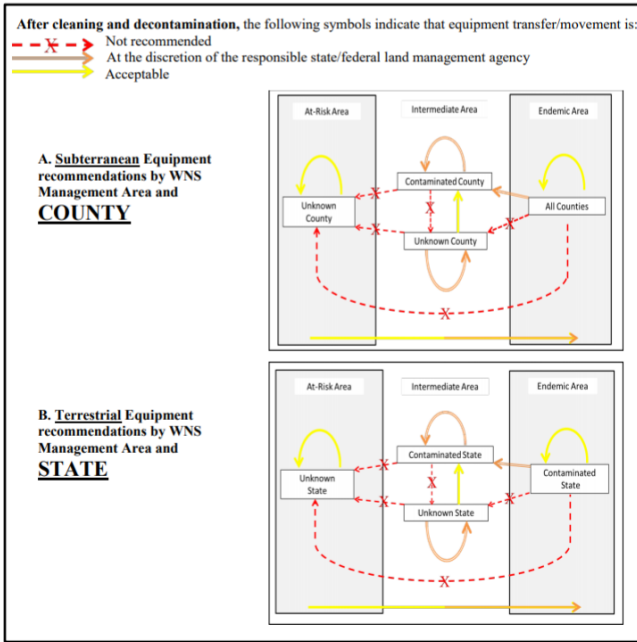
After Decontamination:

It's important to choose equipment that can be easily decontaminated (e.g., rubber or synthetic rather than leather), otherwise it is best to dedicate a set of gear to a specific location. If moving from a WNS positive area to one that is considered an intermediate or at-risk area, it is recommended to dedicate an entire set of gear for those locations separate from the gear used in the contaminated area. Brand new equipment can be used in any location, as long as it has not come in contact with contaminated equipment.

You're done. Decontamination is not difficult and prevents moving both native and non-native species from one cave to another. *Please do your part!*

For questions for more information about WNS in Georgia visit <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/WNS>

For full decontamination procedures, visit <http://whitenosesyndrome.org/topics/decontamination>



Cave Clean!!

- Reduce caving trips especially in winter during hibernation
- Educate people about WNS and clean caving
- Assist with surveys and report both healthy and sick bats

Figure 1: Flow chart explaining when it is/is not appropriate to use old caving equipment at a new

What is White-nose Syndrome (WNS)?

In February 2006 some 40 miles west of Albany, N.Y., a caver photographed hibernating bats with an unusual white substance on their muzzles. He noticed several dead bats. The following winter, bats behaving erratically, bats with white noses, and a few hundred dead bats in several caves came to the attention of New York Department of Environmental Conservation biologists, who documented white-nose syndrome in January 2007.

A newly discovered cold-loving fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, invades the skin of bats. Since its discovery, WNS has caused the deaths of millions of bats, and that number is increasing every year.

Caves in Georgia were confirmed positive for WNS in early 2013. In 2023, total bat numbers in these sites were down 90+% from their highest previous counts. WNS has spread into culverts in central Georgia in recent years and the fungus that causes WNS continues to spread south. Though no dead bats have been found in culverts so far, the continued spread and development of WNS in bats hibernating in culverts in Georgia is concerning.

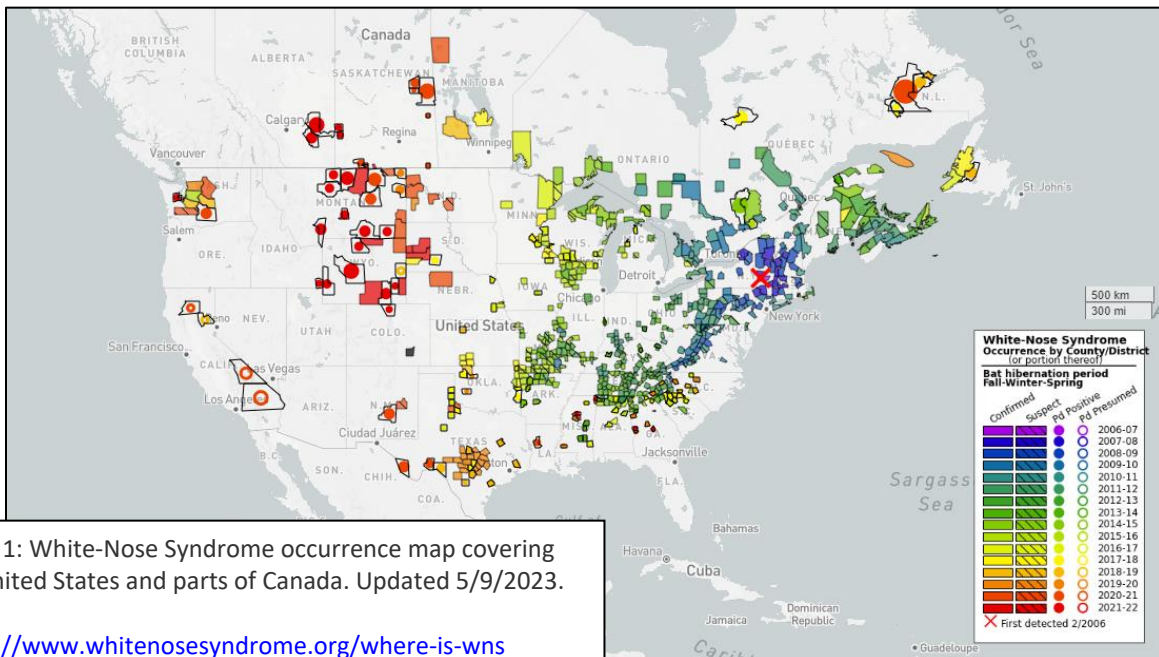


Photo 1: White-Nose Syndrome occurrence map covering the United States and parts of Canada. Updated 5/9/2023.

<https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/where-is-wns>

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