



## Frequently asked questions

### About carpet sea squirt

#### What is carpet sea squirt?

Carpet sea squirt, or *Didemnum vexillum*, is an invasive marine animal that can overgrow rocks, shellfish, sea sponges and algae.

#### What does the carpet sea squirt look like?

It can appear in a range of colours – yellow, pinkish, tan or pale orange, and greyish-white. It forms rope-like tendrils and can look like melted wax on jetty piles, vessel hulls or aquaculture equipment.

#### Where is carpet sea squirt found?

Carpet sea squirt can establish on most hard surfaces including natural and artificial structures (marinas, moorings, etc.). It can be found in estuaries and marine waters from low tide mark to 80 m. Carpet sea squirt is usually found in cooler, temperate waters.

#### Is carpet sea squirt native to Australia?

No. It is native to east Asia. Carpet sea squirt is listed as a pest on the [National Priority List of Exotic Environmental Pests, Weeds and Diseases](#). In Western Australia the species is a noxious fish listed under the [Fish Resources Management Act 1994](#) and a declared pest under the [Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007](#).

#### Why is the carpet sea squirt a pest?

The carpet sea squirt is an invertebrate marine animal that can overgrow and smother native species. It is known to grow rapidly and aggressively on all manner of substrates. It can:

- smother other sessile species including farmed molluscs
- modify habitats it colonises
- foul man-made structures such as wharves, jetty pylons, pontoons, buoys and vessels.

#### How does carpet sea squirt spread?

The most common way it spreads is from infested vessels or marine equipment.

It reproduces both sexually and asexually. It can grow new colonies from small fragments that break off from larger colonies. This allows it to spread quickly and colonise large areas of man-made structures and natural substrate.

#### What is the impact of carpet sea squirt?

Because it attaches itself to vessels, and its ability to reproduce and spread quickly, it has the potential to impact the fishery and aquaculture industries by altering the marine environment. Maintenance costs for commercial and recreational vessels may increase due to increased fouling.

### Managing the impact of carpet sea squirt

#### Where do I find carpet sea squirt?

Carpet sea squirt can be found in east Asia and has been introduced to the USA, New Zealand, Netherlands, France, Ireland and England. In Australia, carpet sea squirt has been introduced to

HMAS Stirling (WA), Australian Marine Complex at Henderson (WA) and Fleet Base East in Sydney Harbour (NSW).

### **Can carpet sea squirt be eradicated?**

Unfortunately, no. Because of its biology and how easily it spreads and reproduces, we have not been able to eradicate this pest. It continues to persist at those sites in WA and NSW, despite management actions. In fact, there have been no successful eradications of this pest anywhere in the world.

### **How are we managing this pest?**

We continue to work with the Department of Defence and the Australian Government to minimise further spread and implement the necessary actions to survey, monitor and align management and control procedures in Western Australia.

We are working collaboratively with local stakeholders and the Fremantle Port Authority to manage this pest. We have an active marine pest surveillance program at the Port of Fremantle and Cockburn Sound.

We conduct a collaborative marine pest surveillance program with WA Port Authorities, which provides ongoing marine pest surveillance at 10 port locations in Western Australia.

## **How you can help**

### **How can I help to prevent carpet sea squirt from spreading?**

If you are a vessel owner, recreational boater, fisher or diver, you can assist in stopping the spread of marine pests and aquatic disease by keeping your boats, trailers, wetsuits and equipment clean.

Make sure that you remove any bait, debris and seaweed and do not return them to the water. Check wheel arches on trailers, boat propellers, fishing tackle and footwear.

Use fresh or soapy water to clean your boat and trailer, fishing rods and other equipment, and allow them to dry completely before using them at another location, even if it is on the same day. Do not clean items in the water or allow any run off to enter the ocean.

### **I think I've found carpet sea squirt. What do I do?**

Step 1: Record your location or screenshot your map or GPS.

Step 2: Take a photo using a coin as reference.

Step 3: Report your sighting at [www.marinepests.gov.au/report](http://www.marinepests.gov.au/report) or contact our aquatic biosecurity team through Fishwatch on 1800 815 507 or email them at [carpetseasquirt@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:carpetseasquirt@dpird.wa.gov.au).

### **Where can I find more information?**

[Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development biosecurity alerts](#)

[Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry](#)

[National Introduced Marine Pest Information System \(NIMPIS\)](#) for technical information.

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