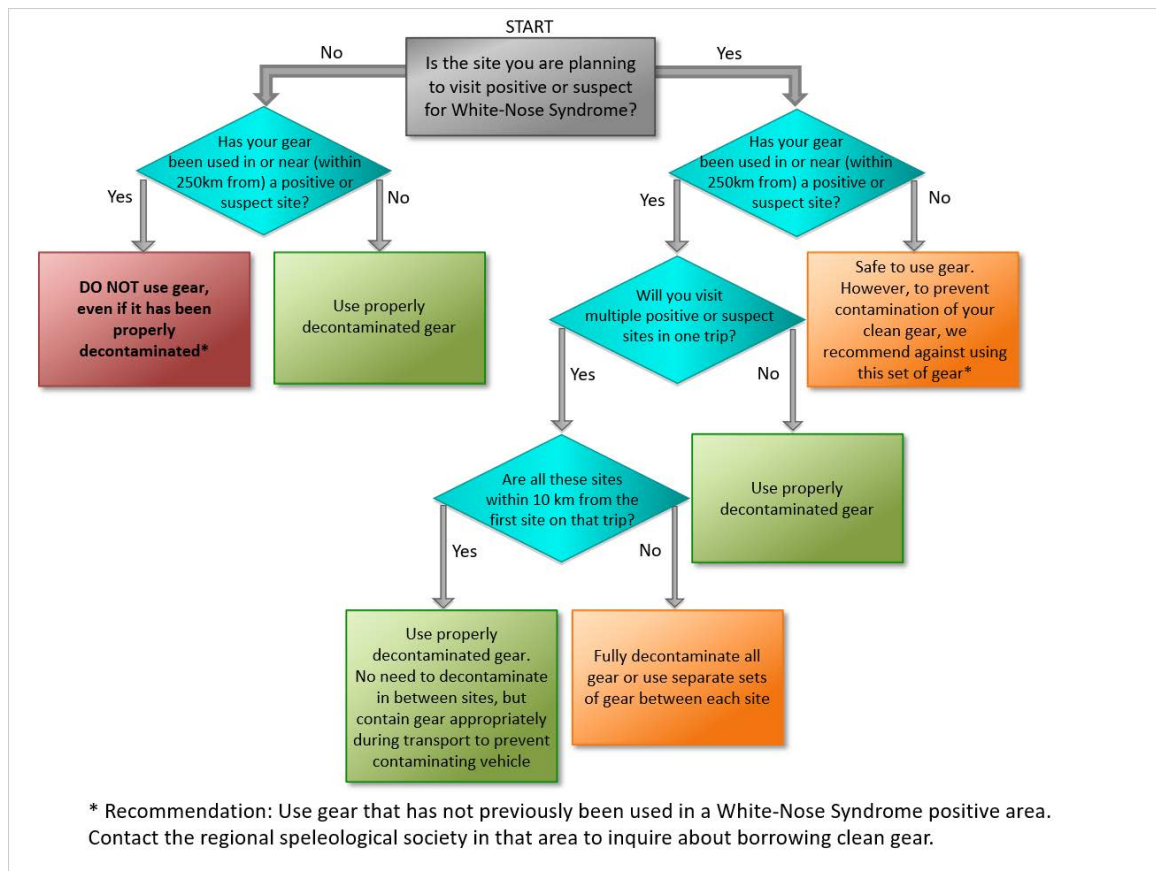


Caver's Guide to White-nose Syndrome Decontamination

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White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is a disease causing extensive mortality of bats in eastern North America. Named for the white fungus that appears on the muzzle and other parts of hibernating bats, WNS has spread rapidly across the eastern United States and Canada. The cause of this disease is a fungus called *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*P.d.*). This fungus can be spread by people and the gear used to visit bat hibernacula (e.g., caves, mines and other bat hibernation habitats). The single most important thing you can do to reduce the impact of WNS is to ensure that you do not spread the fungus to new areas. If moving within WNS infected zones, or provinces neighboring infected states, territories or provinces, please decontaminate all gear that was used underground, or may have come in contact with the fungus to prevent it from being transported to a new location. If travelling to uninfected regions, please use gear that has not been used in infected zones (e.g., borrow local gear).

How to Determine Gear Use or Decontamination Needs?



* Recommendation: Use gear that has not previously been used in a WNS positive area. Contact the regional speleological society in that area to inquire about borrowing clean gear. Note: When moving between sites within 10 km from the first site, we still recommend to always at least change into clean coveralls for each site.

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THE DECONTAMINATION PROCESS

PLAN AHEAD BEFORE EACH HIBERNACULUM VISIT

1. **KNOW THE RISK** – determine the *P.d.* /WNS status of the location where your gear was previously used and of the location to be visited.
2. **MANAGE YOUR GEAR USE** – Choose gear that can be most effectively decontaminated, use dedicated gear, or contact the regional speleological society to inquire about borrowing clean gear.
3. **PLAN TO DEAL WITH POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED GEAR** – Isolate all gear not decontaminated on site and prepare a strategy for cleaning and treatment of gear.

AFTER EACH HIBERNACULUM VISIT

1. **REMOVE DIRT** – brush dirt off on site to limit the amount of spores carried out.
2. **DISCARD DISPOSABLES SAFELY** – contain everything in closed off garbage bags.
3. **CONTAIN MATERIAL TO BE DISINFECTED OFF SITE** – close bags and bins tightly, do not contaminate the inside of your vehicle.
4. **CLEAN GEAR** – use washing detergent and hot water to clean remaining dirt off gear.
5. **DISINFECT GEAR** – submerge gear in water that maintains a temperature of at least 55°C (131°F) for a minimum of 5 minutes or use other chemical disinfectants (e.g., household bleach diluted to 10% by volume; disinfecting wipes).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about white-nose syndrome in Canada and the full decontamination protocol: https://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/bat_health_resources.php#white-nose-syndrome

You can make the difference

**Thank you for helping protecting bat populations
across Canada!**