

ATTENTION : ALL SPELEOS PLANNING TO CAVE IN NORTH AMERICA

NEW THREAT TO BAT POPULATIONS - WHITE NOSE SYNDROME

If caving in the United States, please follow these precautions.

If you are caving in North America and you observe a hibernating bat with a white muzzle or other odd white, fungus-like patches, follow the following guidelines:

- Do not touch any bats (living or dead), especially those with a white muzzle or nose.
- If you have a camera with you, please take a few photographs of the potentially affected bat(s).
- Exit the cave immediately, avoiding contact with other bats.
- Contain and decontaminate your clothing, footwear, and gear following the procedures below.
- Contact your state wildlife agency or the [nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service field office](#) to report your potential white–nose syndrome observations.
- Report any dead bats found outdoors or any unusual numbers of bats outside during cold weather, especially near a cave where bats hibernate.

You should not handle bats. If you come across live or dead bats with white–nose syndrome, contact the relevant US state wildlife agency or [a nearby U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office](#).

Take the following precautions to prevent the possible spread of white–nose syndrome ("cave" includes all caves, fissures, mines, portals, etc.):

- Observe all cave closures and advisories in all states. Some states have instituted closures and issued advisories beyond normal permanent and seasonal closures. New York has closed all infected sites. New York, Vermont and New Jersey have advised all individuals to stay out of all caves with bats. Other states have instituted, or are considering instituting, closures of caves with bats and/or advisories to stay out of caves with bats. On this Web page: http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html updated information about state closures and advisories is provided. Just prior to caving, check this Web page for updated closures and advisories. If this Web page does not include closure information from a state in which you plan to go caving, contact that state's wildlife agency to obtain the latest information on cave access. Before caving in another country, check with the country's wildlife agency for information on cave access.
- Upon exiting a cave, whether inhabited by bats or not, in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and adjacent states (New Hampshire, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania), follow the containment and decontamination procedures below. Decontaminate all clothing, footwear, and gear prior to departing for a caving outing if you did not decontaminate these items after last exiting a

cave. In these states, we ask that you not take gear into a cave if that gear cannot be decontaminated or disposed of (e.g., if harnesses, ropes, or webbing cannot be decontaminated, we advise that you not enter caves or parts of caves requiring use of this gear and not take this gear into the cave).

- Because clothing, footwear, and gear used in accessing a cave in New York or Vermont within the past 2 years could pose a risk of spreading the syndrome, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service advises that these items (whether or not currently located in New York or Vermont) not be used when accessing caves anywhere and that these items not be transported out of New York or Vermont — until the cause of the syndrome is identified and the effectiveness of decontamination procedures can be evaluated. We advise that you decontaminate these items immediately (see decontamination procedures below) and store them away, and that you thoroughly wash and decontaminate any surfaces with which these items may have come into contact (e.g., car trunk).

White–Nose Syndrome Containment and Decontamination Procedures

The US Fish and Wildlife Service asks that cavers please follow these procedures for containment and decontamination in the circumstances identified above. Prior to each caving outing, please check the Web page:

http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html for updates to these procedures.

- When you exit the cave, scrape or brush off any dirt and mud from your clothes, boots, and gear. When you get to your vehicle, remove your clothing, boots, and gear, put them in a plastic/garbage bag, and seal the bag closed to prevent contamination of the vehicle's interior and trunk (and subsequent re-contamination of your gear). Remember to bring extra clothes for the drive home.
- Wash your caving clothes using hot water, detergent, and a normal bleach cycle. Dry the clothes thoroughly at hot temperatures.
- Wash your boots thoroughly with detergent and then soak them in a 10 percent bleach solution (1 part chlorine bleach: 9 parts water) — soak porous boots longer than nonporous boots.
- Wash your gear thoroughly with detergent and then soak in a 10 percent bleach solution.
- Dry items in sunlight if possible.

IDEALLY, IT WOULD BE BEST IF ANY CLOTHING OR OTHER GEAR WORN IN A CAVE IN NORTH AMERICA IS NOT BROUGHT BACK INTO AUSTRALIA.