

Invasive Species Alert

Carpet Sea Squirt

Didemnum vexillum



What is *Didemnum vexillum*?

Didemnum vexillum (common name the carpet sea squirt) is an invasive species which has recently been found in Strangford Lough. Thought to be originally from Japan it has become a pest in other countries due to its ability to grow very quickly which has resulted in it smothering habitats and species as well as interfering with manmade structures, fishing, aquaculture and other activities.

How does it spread?

The carpet sea squirt releases larvae which can settle close to the parent colony or potentially be spread on equipment e.g. trailers and ropes as well as being able to be spread in tidal currents. It can also spread further in currents to new areas or on the hulls of infected boats and via the drift of fragments which have broken off.

How can I help to stop it spreading?

- When removing your boat from the water for maintenance or winter storage ensure that fouling marine life does not re-enter the water (small patches of the sea squirt may go unnoticed on other attached marine life).
- Ensure that all boats and equipment are cleaned away from slipways and drains.
- If ropes are fouled clean them off carefully, again away from the water, and leave them to dry for at least 48 hours or longer if conditions are damp.
- Keep your hull and marine/fishing equipment clean and free of fouling by using antifouling paint.
- Report all sightings through the NIEA pollution hotline number on **0800 80 70 60** or through the 'alien watch' facility of the Invasive Species Ireland website at www.invasivespeciesireland.com
- Follow the guidance in the Recreational Water users Code of Practice and Marina Managers Code of Practice on the Invasive Species Ireland website at www.invasivespeciesireland.com

