



WESTERN RIVERS ALLIANCE

Protecting the Channel Country

Unconventional gas and biosecurity issues. How to minimise the risks and protect your property, business and community.

Biosecurity is everyone's business.

Biosecurity matter includes invasive plants, animals and diseases.

Weeds can overrun pastures causing loss of productivity; affect biodiversity by smothering and out-competing native vegetation; and decrease both water quality and property values. Some weeds (eg parthenium) can impact on human health while others (eg fireweed) are toxic to stock.

Invasive animals may increase total grazing pressure or compete with native animals for food or habitat. Monitoring and managing weeds and pest animals significantly increases property labour costs.

Diseases can spread rapidly and cause costly stock and crop losses as well as harming native plants and animals.

Biosecurity matter can be carried onto the property in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- Vehicles (vehicles carry many viable weed seeds – up to 400 on small vehicles)
- Equipment, tools, machinery, etc
- Soils, gravel, sand – used in well pad and road construction
- Water (non potable) for drilling and hydraulic fracturing
- Waste
- Rehabilitation activities – introduction of new native or introduced grass or broadleaf species that go weedy or which are not endemic to the region
- Boots, bags, clothing
- Straying stock

Shale and other unconventional gas mining bring risks of land and water contamination and other types of damage for rural landholders. Although the industry and governments have sought to reassure landholders that the risks are low, a range of potential impacts are not explicitly covered under existing laws, agreements or policies.

Good biosecurity risk management practices need to be developed to minimise the risks posed by the unconventional gas industry operating on your property.

These risks include:

- large numbers of vehicles, machinery and equipment accessing the property
- increased vehicle movements within the property
- large amounts of sand, gravel etc entering the property for well pad and road construction
- large amounts of chemicals entering the property
- potentially large volumes of un-potable water entering the property.

Biosecurity issues should be raised in the preliminary stages of negotiating access to your property and appropriate strategies described in detail in a conduct and compensation agreement (CCA).

Getting started

- Benchmark existing assets and environmental liabilities (invasive plants, animals etc) on the property prior to any access. A map or list can be used to highlight areas to be avoided, eg a weed infestation, laneway, waterway, cattle yards, etc; and to highlight other relevant issues. Provide this document to the company representative.
- Delineate an access route that the company is to use. One route will make it easier to monitor any new outbreaks of invasive plants, presence of rubbish, status of gates etc.
- Ensure a clear policy is set with property gates being left as found. For certainty, a simple signage system should be adopted.

It is recommended that the following points be included in the CCA and also reiterated at site meetings between the landholder and company representatives.

1. Equipment, Machinery and Vehicles

- Ensure your CCA stipulates that all vehicles, equipment and machinery will be washed or cleaned down prior to entering the property.
- Enforce inspections of equipment, machinery and vehicles and accompanying documentation prior to property access. Inspections should be carried out by a trained, competent inspector with Nationally Accredited (AHC BIO201) *Inspect & Clean Machinery of Plant, Animal and Soil Material* qualifications.
- Stipulate that vehicle inspection documentation only remains valid whilst travelling from camp / depot to the property access point. Be clear that all travel outside of this zone will trigger a new inspection due to the higher risk of picking up biosecurity matter.
- Ensure your CCA stipulates the completion of a logbook entry for all vehicles that visit the property.

2. Visitor / vehicle entry log book and signage

Log books are a good way of keeping a track of who is entering your property.

Signage on the entry gate and exit point ensures that everyone entering your property receives

important information. They are a proactive way of specifying conditions of entry and your expectations of gas industry personnel whilst on your property.

- Information to be recorded in log books should include inspection documentation numbers, driver's name, date and time of entry and departure. Logbooks should be checked regularly to ensure compliance.
- Log books should be kept in a weather proof container at property entry point. The company should provide this.
- If your property and business have organic status, what this means should be included on signage. The company should provide the funds for these signs.

3. Works Program

- Negotiate drilling programs / survey programs with the company representative to ensure that if you have weeds on the property that they work from clean to dirty areas, locate parking areas outside of weed zones etc.
- Stipulate wet weather closure and prohibit activities or access during wet conditions. The landholder should inspect property road conditions before permitting re-entry.

4. Manage produce and materials

- Stipulate that only clean materials (such as gravel, soil, non-potable water, etc) with a hygiene declaration are bought onto the property. If a gravel pit exists on your property negotiate access and royalties associated with its use.
- Ensure that all products and materials bought on to the property are recorded by the company on a spreadsheet with batch numbers, date of purchase, supplier, product type etc. This will assist with traceability. The company should provide this on completion of the job or periodically by negotiation.

5. Rehabilitate disturbed areas quickly

- Enforce rehabilitation of all work areas no more than 1 month following completion of each stage throughout construction or drilling activities, regardless of whether future activities are planned. Getting ground-cover established quickly will prevent erosion, reduce weed emergence and minimise potential for run off from the works site.
- Ensure that only plants that are already present on your property are reintroduced to rehabilitated areas.
- Ensure that the seed or plants meet the requirements for your organic status, if applicable, on your property.

6. Management of weed issues within the lease

- Encourage the company to actively report any new sightings of biosecurity issues in a timely manner.

- Develop a clear list of products & ingredients that they can and can't use for management of invasive species within the leased area.
- Stipulate any weed management activities are to be carried out by licenced operators.
- Stipulate that records of the activity are to be kept and handed over on a weekly basis.
- It is recommended that breaches of weed management strategies be reported to a lawyer.

Legal requirements

Queensland's Biosecurity Act 2014 puts a general biosecurity obligation on everyone to prevent and minimise the spread of biosecurity matter. Hefty fines or gaol terms can be imposed on persons in breach of the Act. These may exceed \$100,000 for an individual and \$500,00 for a corporation.

The general biosecurity obligation means everyone must take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise biosecurity risks, the likelihood of causing a biosecurity event, and to limit the consequences of a biosecurity event.

In the context of the unconventional gas industry operating on your property, examples of things that may exacerbate potential adverse effects of biosecurity matter include:

- failure to take reasonable steps to reduce contaminants in plants and animals, including, for example, by allowing designated animals to graze on land or drink water contaminated with heavy metals, or by using water that may contain a contaminant to irrigate crops
- failure to manage the impact of invasive plants and animals on a person's land.

Biosecurity "notifiable incidents" can be reported using the form at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/biosecurity/about-biosecurity/biosecurity-act-2014/information-and-resources-about-the-act/overview-and-foundation-principles/notifiable-incidents>

For more information on the Biosecurity Act, contact Biosecurity Queensland on 132523, your authorised Local Government officer or visit www.daf.qld.gov.au

The Land Access Code 2016 is specifically relevant to the mineral resources and petroleum and gas sectors. It includes mandatory conditions to manage the spread of weeds when accessing private lands. It can be downloaded [here](#).

Specific complaints related to gas industry activities can be lodged via <https://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/forms/mining-exploration/complaint-form>

For information about training for (AHC BIO201) *Inspect & Clean Machinery of Plant, Animal and Soil Material* qualifications, visit <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/AHC BIO201A#>