



Information about

# The invasive alga

## ***Didymosphenia geminata***

### ROCK SNOT

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Departament de Medi Ambient i  
Sostenibilitat - phone number 875 707



Govern d'Andorra

## What is rock snot?

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The alga *Didymosphenia geminata*, commonly known as Didymo or rock snot, is a freshwater diatom alga.



Photographs: Ambiotec M&S SLU

During periods of proliferation, mounds form along the riverbed. The color of these groups varies from yellowish-brown to white. To the touch, Didymo algae have a texture similar to wet wool. Dry clumps look like pieces of toilet paper.

Although it is likely native to Europe and North America, since the 1980s, the global spread of this species has been observed. It is highly likely that climate change is related to this phenomenon.

This alga has been present for years in Catalonia and Ariège. In 2021, it was detected for the first time in some areas of Andorra, along with another invasive alga with similar characteristics: *Gomphoneis minuta*.

The main vectors for the spread of Didymo in rivers are users and their uncleaned equipment. Examples include felt soles on fishing boots (which should be avoided), fishing lines, flies, clothing, and off-road vehicles. Wild animals, such as waterfowl, as well as pets, can also be vectors of introduction and spread of Didymo algae.

## Threats of rock snot

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This alga is not an indicator of eutrophication; on the contrary, it proliferates in clean waters. Its proliferation saturates the river, limits other aquatic life, and significantly reduces biodiversity. According to scientific studies, due to its proliferation, the alga can reduce the fish population in a river. Once introduced into a river, it is impossible to eliminate Didymo.

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## Prevention and cleaning

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To limit the spread of Didymo and any other invasive aquatic species, it is recommended to restrict the use of equipment, clothing, or any other object that may have come into contact with the algae to a single watercourse. If it is necessary to move from one body of water to another, these items should be cleaned following the recommendations below:

**A.** Non-absorbent material (soak and then scrub for at least one minute with any of the recommended cleaning solutions):

- Hot water at a temperature of 60 °C
- A 2% bleach solution (200 ml and enough water to make a total volume of 10 liters)
- A 5% saline solution (500 ml or two cups and enough water to make a total volume of 10 liters)
- A 5% hand sanitizer solution (500 ml or two cups and enough water to make a total volume of 10 liters)
- A 5% liquid dish detergent solution (500 ml or two cups and enough water to make a total volume of 10 liters)
- Allow to dry completely for at least 48 hours

**B.** Absorbent material

Absorbent materials, such as felt on fishing boots or neoprene, require a longer immersion time in cleaning solutions to allow saturation of the material:

- For at least 40 minutes in hot water at a temperature maintained above 45 °C.
- For at least 30 minutes in hot water at a temperature maintained above 45 °C containing a 5% dish detergent solution or a 2% bleach solution.

It is very important to ensure that all algae clumps that may have adhered to the equipment or clothing are removed before leaving an area. If clumps are discovered later, they should not be thrown down the drain but rather disposed of in the trash.

If you observe an algal bloom or have any doubts about the condition of the river, report it to the Departament de Medi Ambient i Sostenibilitat at phone number 875 707.