

Biosecurity Workshop in St Helena

By Naomi Baxter, Biosecurity Officer

In March I was very lucky to visit St Helena to attend a biosecurity workshop. The workshop was organised by CABI who run the 'crop protection compendium' which FIG are signed up to. This is an online service that lists all the crop pests known in the world and works to control or eradicate them. We use the compendium to help us identify bugs and diseased plants.

Through this project CABI are helping St Helena and the Falklands to develop better risk assessment processes and were able to fund my trip to the remote island. At the workshop we worked on developing a 'new import risk assessment' procedure which would be used in the event anyone wants to import a new commodity to the Islands. We were also working on a 'pest risk assessment' form which will help us assess whether something that either newly here or may get here soon, is likely to become invasive or not. Training was provided on how to assess the risk of establishment spread and 'invasiveness'. The attendees in St Helena comprised local biosecurity officers, biocontrol specialists and the National Trust, and was held at the Consulate Hotel in Jamestown.

This project is running for another year and we hope the next workshop will be based in Stanley at the end of 2019/early 2020.

Whilst I was in St Helena I also took the opportunity to see how they do biosecurity and was able to help them inspect some cars that had been imported as well as work with their biosecurity dog Harri. Harri is trained to sniff out fruit and honey – St Helena have one of the very few colonies of disease free bees in the world so protecting them from any diseased bee products is really important. Harri is able to sniff passengers as they come in at the new airport and on cruise ships. A job which takes her a few minutes would take a human hours, and probably disgruntle any visitors who only have a precious few hours on the Island and don't want to spend them being searched.

It was a privilege to visit St Helena and wonderful to make the connection with another OT so we can help each other in future. Although there are obvious differences in climate and habitats, being a small island reliant on import and with lots of visitors means we face the same biosecurity issues and were able to help each other out and learn from each other.



St Helena appears out of nowhere



A different habitat and climate to the Falklands but similar issues being a small island community



The workshop closed with a specially made cake