

Badgers

Protected Species
Guidance Note: 2014

Survey Season Calendar

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Activity		Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Bait marking		Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Sett closure / exclusions		Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Inappropriate

■ Optimal
 ■ Sub-optimal
 ■ Inappropriate

Why Survey?

SERVICES:

- Badger activity and monitoring surveys
- Badger bait marking surveys
- Badger sett closure & development licence applications
- Mitigation design and implementation (including artificial setts)
- Advice on legislation and best practice
- Habitat creation and enhancement
- Badger exclusions and sett closures
- Site supervision (clerk of works) for interference works, under licence

Badger surveys are required if an area of land to be disturbed or impacted upon is deemed to be suitable to support badger setts. An activity survey can identify if any setts are present on site or within 30m of the site boundary, or if badgers are using the site for foraging or moving between setts and foraging grounds. If present, actions can be taken to avoid disturbing the badgers, such as movement or realignment of works to a legal distance away from the sett. Mitigation measures can be put in place to protect the badgers, allowing the development to continue.

Methodology

Badgers are highly territorial, particularly in early spring and late autumn and so this is when most territorial marking takes place. This makes it the best time to survey, although surveys can be undertaken at any time of year. Most badger cubs are born in the first fortnight of February, and are weaned and above ground by early May. Badgers do not hibernate, but do spend more time below ground during the winter months, when they may not emerge from their sett for increased periods of time.

Activity surveys: All areas of potential badger habitat both within and immediately surrounding the site are systematically searched in order to determine the importance and usage of the site by badgers. Signs include paw prints, latrines, dung pits, snuffle holes, and distinctive pathways through vegetation. All boundary features (hedges, fences, walls, gateways) are examined for signs of territory marking, runways and stray hairs. Particular attention is paid to any suitable sett building habitat present, especially hedgerows, earthbanks, woodland and scrub. Any setts found are examined to establish their level of usage, including if the entrance is free of debris, badger hairs, nearby latrines, discarded bedding, and signs of fresh digging.

Bait marking surveys: The purpose of bait marking surveys is to establish territory size and boundaries of badger clans. Clans use latrines at the edge of their territories to demarcate their home range. A detailed survey is conducted to locate all setts and well used latrines and dung pits within the area of interest. Each sett is assigned a different colour. Bait (peanuts and syrup mix) containing indigestible coloured marker pellets (with relevant colour assigned to each sett) is placed outside each sett entrance. Through recording the location of different coloured pellets found in dung pits, it's possible to determine territory boundaries and which setts are used by which social group.





Legislation:

Badgers and their setts are protected under various legislation, drawn together under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This makes it a criminal offence to wilfully kill, injure, take, possess, or cruelly ill-treat a badger; or attempt to interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it; obstruct access to any entrance of a sett; or disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. A badger sett is defined in the legislation as “any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger”.



Bait marking surveys can only be undertaken after an initial activity survey has been completed to locate all setts (where the bait is placed) and latrines (where the pellets are found). Bait marking should run for a minimum of five successive days, during which each sett is checked and re-baited as required, with all latrines visited to look for coloured pellets.

Monitoring surveys: Monitoring surveys are often required for large or long-term developments, such as road schemes affecting known badger clans. The purpose of conducting these surveys is to monitor the badger activity within the area. It is common for badger territories to contain more setts than they use at any one time; moving from currently occupied to disused setts from one year to the next. Therefore, if a sett is classified as disused during an activity survey one year, it may become occupied the following year. This may then require mitigation to allow the planned development to continue near this sett. Monitoring is sometimes a requirement as part of an exclusion licence, which is also useful to assess the success of any mitigation measures which have been implemented, such as installation of artificial setts.



Mitigation

A licence is required when development or maintenance works will affect an occupied badger sett, or take place within 30m of such a sett. This is issued by Natural England. Sett closures are considered a last resort and it must be proven that all other options have been considered. Mitigation measures can be agreed and undertaken prior to and during construction works, under the terms of the licence. Licences will not be granted until Natural England are satisfied that there will be no negative impact upon badgers present, which will be after the results of a recent badger activity or bait marking survey are reviewed. Due to the breeding cycle of the badger, development licences are only granted for works to occur between July and the end of November. This is to avoid disturbing females during the implantation process in early winter and young cubs in early spring.