



Badgers - What you need to know.

Introduction

Badgers are a protected species and among Britain's best loved wild animals. Both the badgers and the badger sett are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This includes working too close to a sett (a minimum of 30 metres for heavy machinery) without taking steps to positively avoid damage and without an appropriate licence. It is no excuse to be unaware of the presence of badgers. Penalties can be fines of £5,000, along with up to 6 months imprisonment.



Badger facts...

Badger setts can be almost anywhere. Sloping grounds in woods, scrub, hedge banks, field boundaries, by railway lines and even under railway lines. They can be disturbed by work close to the sett, even if there is no direct interference or damage to the sett.

Badger setts can be very extensive, with some having over 40 entrances, others as few as 2.

Badgers are creatures of habit, so will use the same pathways for foraging areas and will continue to try and do so despite any new obstacles that are placed in their way, such as new fences or new roads.

Adult badgers can grow up to 1 metre in length and weigh up to 14kg.

Their diet consists of earthworms (up to 200 in one meal), grains, acorns, insects and fruit.

They are territorial and live in family or social units.

Badgers are extremely loyal to their setts and will often continue to occupy them despite disturbance.

Badgers do not hibernate, but they often stay below ground for long periods in winter, especially during very cold or wet weather.

Badgers mate throughout the year, but pregnancy starts around the end of November / early December.

Cubs are born underground towards the end of January / beginning of February, emerging for the first time after 8 weeks. The cubs remain dependent for a further few weeks while they are weaned and learn to fend for themselves.

FOR THESE REASONS LICENCES ARE NOT USUALLY GRANTED BY ENGLISH NATURE BETWEEN DECEMBER AND JUNE INCLUSIVE.

Field signs

Badger Setts

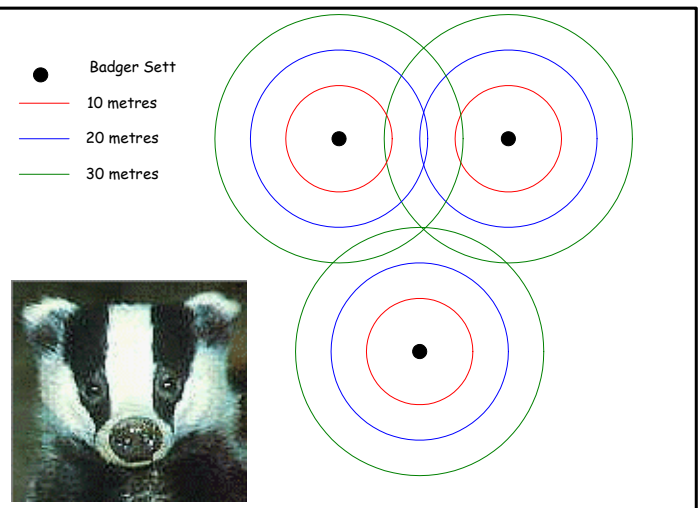


Badger setts are often an underground maze.

Badger sett tunnels tend not to be circular, but look more like a letter D.



The size of the entrance is around 20 cm (8 inches) by 30 cm (12 inches) both fox and rabbit holes are smaller. Often a pile of straw, bracken, dry grass or leaves will be outside the entrance - badgers use these materials to line the sleeping chamber. Badgers are born to dig so you will often find signs of digging.



Badger Footprints

Badger footprints are quite easy to identify, they have one large wide pad with 5 toes (although the 5th toe does not always show up clearly) the footprints can be differentiated from a dog's as all 4 main toes are lined up in a row in front of the pad, all pointing forwards.



The long badger claws will also make an imprint in the substrate.

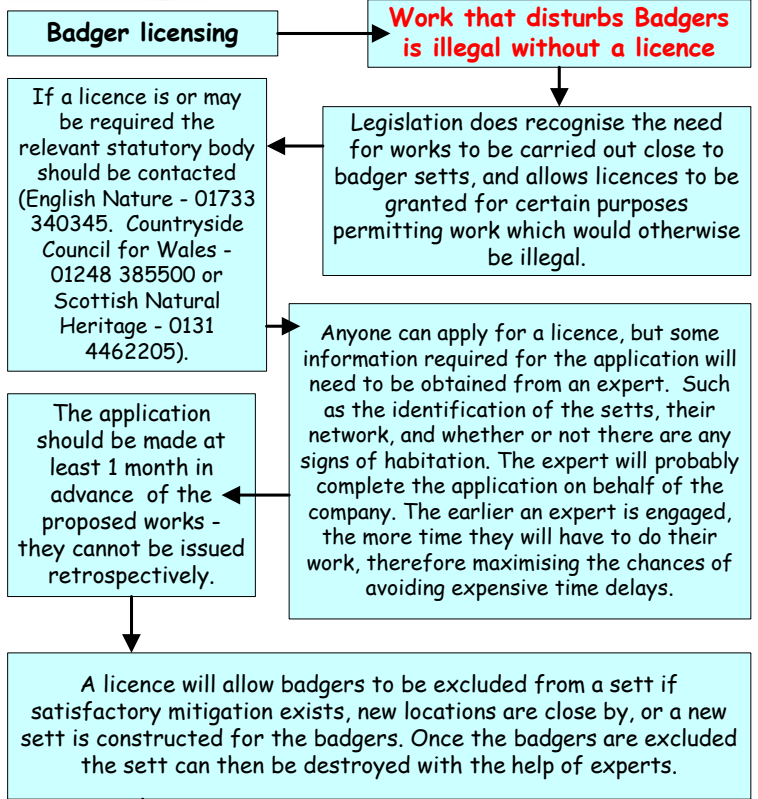


Badgers do not usually have a solitary sett, but often a network of interlinking setts, annexes and subsidiaries with the opening up of new setts, maintenance and extending of old setts happening throughout the year. The diagram above shows how areas around sett entrances can overlap - emphasising the need to establish the network of setts before any work takes place.



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Legislation.
 The protection of Badgers Act (1992) consolidated and improved previous legislation. The Act includes the following criminal offences (among others):
To kill, injure or take a Badger;
To interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it;
To obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett;
To 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" and this is taken by the statutory bodies (English Nature (EN), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)) to include seasonally used setts.
 Penalties for infringing the law can be severe and fines of up to £5,000 plus up to six months imprisonment can be levied by a court for each sett interference resulting from illegal or reckless activity.



Statutory Authorities (EN, SNH & CCW) have guidelines on the types of activity that they consider should be licensed within certain distances of sett entrances.

Distance from sett	Activities requiring a licence.
within 10 metres of the sett	Hand digging, scrub clearance, light machinery and heavy machinery.
within 20 metres of the sett	Light machinery, especially that used for digging.
within 30 metres of the sett	Heavy machinery



Badger year planner

Badger licences are not usually granted by English Nature between December and June inclusive.

Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
NO WORK CLOSE TO SETTS						No new exclusions to begin.					
							Badger exclusion licensing season				
Best time for field surveys											
						Still OK for field surveys, but not as effective					
Artificial sett construction can take place											
				Territorial bait marking surveys can be done by experts							

Badger Experts

If a badger sett or any Badger field signs are spotted on site, contact your site environmental co-ordinator, environment advisor or local badger group in the first instance for advice. Details of local badger groups can be found at www.nfbg.org.uk.

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