

# Fact Sheet 1: Starting a Rescue Service



## INTRODUCTION

Badger rescue services are offered to trap and capture injured or sick badgers and transport them for veterinary and/or rehabilitation care.

Volunteering in any capacity is a big commitment and starting a rescue service is something that needs serious consideration from individuals who are keen to be involved, as well as the badger group committee.

There are various aspects to consider, not only the financial side of purchasing equipment and paying for potential vet treatment or rehabilitation costs (if applicable), but also the unsocial hours, publication of contact details, dealing with the public, training, and coping with challenging or upsetting situations.

That said, being able to rescue injured or sick animals at their most dire time of need, get them urgent veterinary care and hopefully release them back to the wild can be hugely rewarding, knowing that you have helped them on their journey.

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

It is advisable to have a rescue protocol document for your badger group to ensure the safety of your volunteers. This should cover, rescue procedures, legalities, health & safety, biosecurity & equipment cleaning procedures, record keeping, lone working, and an up-to-date risk assessment. NB: It can cover additional aspects and include your contact lists, equipment lists, reporting forms and other related documents. All rescue team members should be made aware of, and given access to, the full Badger Rehabilitation Protocol.

## LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Badgers are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Both these acts protect badgers from being illegally taken from the wild or killed, but make provision for the treatment of 'disabled' animals to release them back into the wild. See Fact Sheet 6: Legal Considerations for further information.



*Image: Cub in netting © Northants Badger Group*

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*Image: Injured badger in cage © Northants Badger Group*

## OPERATING HOURS

Volunteer availability can vary and therefore you should consider the operating times of your rescue service and any capacity issues for delivery that you might have. Consider if you will offer a 24-hour service or at specified times, e.g. daytime or evening only.

If you are offering the service a specified times only, you must make this clear on any public promotion, but always bear in mind that members of the public may call you at any time. Consideration needs to be made on what contact details will be publicised, will you have a dedicated mobile number or share your volunteer's mobile numbers? An option is to have rescue coordinators who deal with initial calls and then refer them down to the rescue team, such as through a chat group or phone call.

## VOLUNTEERS

To offer a rescue service you need to have available volunteers. They will also need access to training and regular support.

The role and responsibilities of volunteers must be well defined, and all prospective volunteers should be instructed on the potential hazards of handling badgers and of biosecurity measures. This should also include the need to keep human-badger contact to a minimum.

Badger rescues can vary wildly, the rescue team needs to be aware that they may be entering some unknown situations, so adaptability and the ability to remain calm under pressure are key skills of the role. Rescue calls can come in at any time of day or night, so it is important to be prepared for this, know what information you require from the caller, how to communicate quickly with your rescue team and be ready to mobilise quickly. Good communication between team members and members of the public reporting injured badgers is essential.

Volunteers should be aware of the practicalities of being a rescuer such as unsocial hours, being out in all weathers, physical and challenging aspects and the need for resilience. Not all rescues have a happy outcome of release, and some can be upsetting to deal with, therefore a good support network is needed. Volunteers should always have relevant and regular training, access to protocols and procedures and a lead contact so they can access support and advice at all times.

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## TRAINING

Badgers should only be retrieved by those with experience and training; those without suitable training and experience should refer calls to experienced colleagues.

When thinking about starting a rescue service, accessing appropriate training and support is imperative. Experienced rescuers will also have a whole host of advice from their in-practice learning which can be shared with new rescuers, particularly when shadowing them on a rescue.

Many badger groups have offered a rescue service for several years and could offer support and training. In addition, some wildlife rescue centres (e.g. Secret World Wildlife Rescue) and Badger Trust offer different aspects of rescue training either online or in-person.

Offering your own in-house training to your volunteers is also advised, this is to ensure that they have the right equipment and know your rescue protocol, contacts and procedures. It is an opportunity to ask questions and get to know their fellow rescuers.

## INSURANCE

**Badger groups should have sufficient insurance in place to cover a rescue service and the volunteers undertaking this.**

**Insurance should include public liability cover and state that it covers the rescue services offered by the badger group.**

**In addition, those using their own vehicle for a voluntary role must inform their car insurance company that they are using it for volunteering purposes.**

**It is best to discuss your rescue service offering directly with your insurance company to ensure you are suitably covered.**



*Image: Badger Cub Rescue Call Out © Northants Badger Group*

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## CONTACTS

It is important to have a list of contacts for your rescue service.

This should include:

- Rescue team lead contact details (or a designated committee member for emergencies).
- Contacts for other members of the rescue team (this may include committee members).
- Local vet practices in your designated area.
- Wildlife rehabilitation centres that have the expertise to care for badgers.

You may wish to make prior contact and build relationships with local vets and wildlife rescue centres to tell them about your rescue service. This will help ensure that you have suitable places to take a rescued badger in an emergency and you are aware of their out-of-hours procedures. They can also be a source of information and support.

## VETERINARY PRACTICES

All veterinary surgeons in the UK are required by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) to provide emergency care for all species of animals at all times, so all vets must provide care for badgers.

Additionally, most vets subscribe to the BVA/RSPCA Memorandum of Understanding, which provides for the emergency care of wildlife casualties free of charge during normal hours.

Some groups opt to have a client account with local veterinary practices and some practices offer a discounted or 'charity rate' for ongoing treatment that might be needed above the emergency aspect.

Ensuring your rescue team knows where to take a rescued badger and what options are available to them is important to consider at an early stage. This may also need regular review.

See Fact Sheet 7: Badger Emergency Care for more detailed information.



*Image: Rescued badger in cage  
© Northants Badger Group*

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## REHABILITATION OPTIONS

It is important to make contact with any local wildlife rescue centres early on when considering setting up a rescue service, as having a place for badgers to get the ongoing care they may need is essential.

Wildlife Rescue Centres are the main option for ongoing rehabilitation of badgers after initial emergency vet treatment. Alternatively, some have in-house vets and can have an injured badger transported to them straight after rescue.

Having a good relationship and communication with your local wildlife rescue centres will be very helpful and ensure a smooth rescue, rehabilitation and release process for any badgers.

Some badger groups set up their own in-house rehabilitation pens, this is generally for adult badgers who have had veterinary attention and need some rest and care before being released back where they were found. Advice and training must be sought from experienced individuals or wildlife rehabilitation centres before undertaking this.

NB: See Fact Sheet 5: Badger Cubs and Fact Sheet 3: Artificial Setts for information relating to badger cub rehabilitation and release.

## FUNDING

Setting a rescue service up from scratch requires initial funding for equipment. In addition, there needs to be consideration of any veterinary or rehabilitation costs. Therefore the badger group needs to consider how to raise funds for this service and how to maintain them.

Badger Trust offers grant funding to affiliated member groups which could be used for rescue equipment. Specific grants are also available for emergency rescue costs and rescued cubs.

Other fundraising will need to be utilised to ensure sufficient funds to cover the service offered.

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## EQUIPMENT

Those attending call-outs regularly will require equipment that ensures they can retrieve the injured badger from any number of situations in a safe and welfare-friendly way. Training on how to use the equipment and an understanding of rescue scenarios, as well as injuries is also important.

## RESCUE EQUIPMENT

This is a basic list of the equipment rescuers should have:

- A cage (side and top opening for easy access).
- Professional graspers.
- Gauntlet Gloves.
- Net.
- Board.
- Blanket for cage/or capture.
- Powerful Torches (include a head torch for hands-free).
- Heavy-duty pincers, pliers or wire cutters.
- Secateurs (for brambles/foilage).
- Mobile phone for emergency contacts.
- App on phone (What3words) to record rescue location.
- Equipment cleaning supplies (disinfectant, gloves, scrubbing brush).



## ROAD SAFETY EQUIPMENT

- Hi-visibility clothing (Jacket with long sleeves).
- Roadside warning triangle.
- Head Torch.
- Use of vehicle hazard warning lights.

Remember: When attending a badger on a road, you must first assess the risk before any action is taken.

You may need to call the police for assistance to ensure the safety of yourself, other road users and the badger. This is essential if on a motorway or large A road.

*Image: Rescue equipment - cages, gauntlet gloves, graspers © Northants Badger Group*

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## EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS

A wide range of agricultural, pet and veterinary suppliers provide equipment suitable for badgers. Below are some examples:

- Traps, cages, graspers and gauntlets <http://www.mdexports.co.uk/Home.html>
- Cages: Hamster Baskets <https://www.hamsterbaskets.co.uk>
- Incubators: <http://www.brinsea.co.uk>
- Approved disinfectants list: <http://disinfectants.defra.gov.uk>
  - Disinfectant: Safe4 <https://safe4disinfectant.com/>

## REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

- Badger Rehabilitation Protocol  
<https://www.secretworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Badger-Rehabilitation-Protocol-Final-Liz-07032018.pdf>
- Contact details for veterinary surgeons and practices can be found at:  
<https://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/home>
- Veterinary information on badgers is available in the following:  
BSAVA Manual of Wildlife Casualties, BSAVA Publications, Gloucester
- British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council  
<https://www.bwrc.org.uk/bwrc-guidelines/>
- Secret World Wildlife Rescue  
<https://www.secretworld.org/wildlife-courses>
- Grants  
<https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/badger-trust-grants>



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