



# Guidelines for Badger Carcass Collection and Risk Assessment

## APHA Southern Edge RTA Study 2021

### » Introduction

#### Background

The Animal and Plant Health Agency, in collaboration with the University of Nottingham, is now conducting a project to detect the presence and location of TB infection in badgers in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and East Sussex - collectively known as the Southern Edge Area. Our aim is to collect badger carcasses which will then undergo post-mortem examination and testing for the presence of TB infection. To do this effectively we are looking for volunteers to help with the safe and timely retrieval of badger carcasses which will be bagged and then collected from any business or residential address by APHA's specialised courier service within 48 hours.

We aim to collect 100 fresh, 'found dead' badger carcasses per county, most likely those killed in road traffic accidents (RTA); 500 carcasses in total. Once 100 satisfactory carcasses have been examined per county, collection will then cease in that county. Once county targets are hit, all stakeholders will be informed.

The results of this work will help develop a picture of the situation in the Southern Edge area, alongside the results of other studies in the Edge area.

#### How you can help?

Collection kits containing everything you need to collect a carcass will be supplied and when safe to do so, you will need to let us know that you have a carcass for collection.

To help cover any cost of transporting a fresh viable carcass we can contribute £25 per carcass to you upon request. Details of how to claim this contribution towards expenses are available later in this document.

#### Useful Project Contacts

 07798 882392 or 020 8026 2370 (if mobile number is unavailable)  
 [southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk](mailto:southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk)

## » Before you begin

### Collection Kits

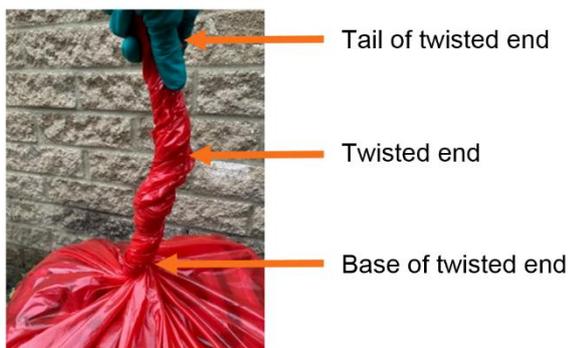
To order a collection kit for delivery you need to e-mail [southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk](mailto:southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk). Please state how many you think you are likely to need. (If you find more carcasses than expected during the period of the project, more kits can be ordered.) Each collection kit is numbered and before using check that it contains the following items (box below). If anything is missing please contact 07798 882392:

- Clear plastic sealable bag for completed badger submission form (the entire collection kit will be contained inside this)
- 3 x large red heavy-duty bags
- White plastic numbered cable tie (the number will act as a unique identifier for each badger carcass)
- 2 x black plastic non-numbered cable ties
- 1 x 'Exempt Animal Specimen' label
- One pair of gloves (large)
- Face Covering (Included for Covid-19 purposes, for example if dropping carcasses off with someone at another premises)
- Badger submission form

### The Gooseneck method

All carcass bags must be sealed using the gooseneck method as set out below:

- Grasp the bag just above the carcass, twist the excess from the bottom upwards to create a twisted end.
- Fold the tail of the twisted end down towards its base, to make a loop just above the carcass.
- Secure the twisted end loop with a non-numbered black cable tie at the base of the twist.



### Badger submission form

The badger submission form must be completed for each carcass collected, preferably before collection of the carcass takes place. The carcass location should be noted at the time of collection. We ask that you provide the location as per instructions on the back of the Badger Submission Form.

## Carcass suitability and collection

Ensure the animal is dead before attempting collection. At the roadside, the simplest way to check if there is any doubt, is to carefully watch for breathing and to touch the badger's back pad or rump your foot with your foot or a blunt object (there should be no response). On the rare occasion that a response is seen, call the RSPCA, local wildlife rehabilitator or a local vet.

A carcass will need to be assessed as to whether it is fresh enough to submit for post-mortem examination. Decomposing or extensively damaged carcasses should not be collected: the main body of the badger should be intact, and as a general rule if the skin is discoloured (greenish) and/or both skin and hair can easily be pulled away from the carcass, it should not be collected.

## Contacting APHA for courier collection

As soon as possible after collection, let APHA know that you have a carcass for collection by the courier. Carcasses need to be delivered to the University of Nottingham within 48 hours of collection. We ask that until collection by courier takes place, the carcass is kept as cool as possible. If they can be placed inside a refrigerated unit until collection by courier, then this is beneficial, but not essential. The carcass **must not be frozen**. The courier will be booked by APHA. Please inform us by emailing [southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk](mailto:southernedgerta@apha.gov.uk) or calling/messaging us at 07798 882392 each time you have a carcass/carcasses for collection.

Details required are:

- Collection address and precise location of the carcass – please state if you envisage that you will not be at the collection address. Details can be provided to the courier.
- How many carcasses
- Number on the white plastic cable tie

We ask that you notify us by 10:30am for collection that day and/or 3:30pm for collection the next day. This part of the project is important as it ensures we adhere to the 48-hour turnaround time. Collection by courier will take place between Monday and Thursday. Please keep the carcass as cool as possible over the weekend (outside, if cool enough, or in fridges/chillers) and let us know so we can make arrangements for Monday morning. Friday courier collections might be possible in exceptional circumstances.

## Requesting a contribution towards expenses

To help cover any cost of transporting a fresh viable carcass we can contribute £25 per carcass to you upon request. Upon your first submission you will be emailed a Claim Form that needs to be completed and emailed at the end of each month for the carcasses you have collected.

When you submit your first carcass, you will be set up as a supplier and you will be emailed a unique Purchase Order (PO) number which you will need to quote on future claim forms. The contribution will be paid directly into the specified bank account. If you wish this can also be directly to your chosen organisation or charity – you will need to provide full details for this.

## Requesting feedback of results

You can request the results of any carcass you collect that returns a positive result by ticking a box on the badger submission form. We will provide regular updates on the progress per county towards targets on a monthly basis and have engagement events throughout the period of the project.

## » Risk Assessment

We ask that you understand and control the risks associated with this activity and this guidance will help.

### Hazards

- Physical hazards associated with collection (road traffic, lifting)
- Biological hazards (tuberculosis, but also other infections including salmonellosis)

### Physical Risk

- Road safety is a major concern when collecting carcasses. All situations should be assessed carefully and, if there is any risk to you or other road users, then collection must not be attempted.
- Badgers can weigh up to 15kg so care must be taken when lifting carcasses, not to put undue strain on your back. For tips on safe lifting, see, for example, <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/safe-lifting-tips.aspx>
- You should ensure that the badger is dead before collecting it. While the vast majority of road-killed badgers will be clearly dead, very rarely one may simply be stunned or badly injured. At the roadside, the simplest way to check if there is any doubt, is to carefully watch for breathing and to touch the badger's back pad or rump with your foot or a blunt object (there should be no response).

### Biological Risk

- *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*) is the cause of bovine TB. The main route of transmission from animal to people is likely to be respiratory, when the animal is alive. As a dead, non-breathing animal, respiratory risk is removed. However, *M. bovis* can be passed through cuts or ingestion, so it is important to always wear the disposable gloves as advised in this guidance.
- In addition to *M. bovis*, badgers can be infected with a range of other diseases that can pass to people. Of these, the most common and potentially the most serious is *Salmonella*. Touching an infected badger and ingesting is the most likely route for this. Disposable gloves (provided by in collection kit) must be used at all times when handling carcasses and do not put your hands anywhere near your mouth.

The following protocols aim to minimise the risks outlined above. However you are in the best position to judge the particular risks and must take responsibility for your own and others' safety.

### General road safety

- Road safety is a major concern when collecting carcasses. Under no circumstances should RTA badgers be collected from motorways (including hard shoulders) and major dual carriageways.
- All situations should be assessed carefully and, if there is any risk to you or other road users, then collection must not be attempted.
- Park the vehicle as near to the carcass as possible, taking due regard to the rules of safe parking set out in the Highway Code.
- If appropriate, red warning triangles and hazard warning lights should be used. The collection vehicle should stop in a position that gives protection while collection is under way.
- Wearing a reflective jacket is recommended.
- If the carcass is on the road, first check for oncoming vehicles before moving the carcass to the verge and a safe location for inspection, bagging and loading.
- If at any point collection is considered to be too dangerous, do not collect the carcass.

## Collecting the badger

Disposable gloves (provided in the collection kit) must be used at all times when handling carcasses. Do not push air out of the top of the bag and into your face - this must be avoided. Avoid contact with badger claws when handling the carcass as these will scratch and damage skin.

## Coronavirus

You should be mindful of government advice on measures to take to help mitigate risks associated with coronavirus, particularly social distancing and wearing face coverings when necessary.

## Collecting badgers and the law

Badgers and their setts (tunnels and chambers where they live) are protected by law (Protection of Badgers Act 1992). Guidance on 'Badgers: protection and licences' can be obtained from the Natural England / Defra website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-protection-surveys-and-licences>

'A person is guilty of an offence if, except as permitted by or under this Act, they have in their possession or under their control any dead badger or any part of, or anything derived from, a dead badger. As the Act exempts actions that were 'the incidental result of a lawful operation and could not reasonably have been avoided' e.g. Road Traffic Collisions, possession of a dead badger in these circumstances would not be regarded as an offence.'

Advice from Natural England is that collecting a road-killed badger for this study is perfectly legal and does not require a licence. If you have any queries about this or are challenged while collecting or storing a badger carcass for this study you can contact (or suggest your challenger contacts) Natural England at: [wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk) or (during normal working hours) 0300 060 3900. If you suspect a badger has been killed illegally, it is advisable to take photographic evidence of where and when the carcass was found. This should be reported to your local wildlife crime officer.