

# Bat Conservation Trust



## A guide to licencing for bat carers

### Possession of a dead bat (England, Scotland and Wales)

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (England and Wales) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007, individuals in possession of a dead bat, or a part of a bat (collected since June 1994) are likely to require a licence. Application forms for the possession of dead specimens can be acquired from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO). The applicant will be asked to justify their reasoning for possessing the specimen (e.g. for education/training purposes) and provide details of its origin.

### Licences to keep live bats long term

#### *Should you keep bats?*

Bats are wild animals, and the goal should always be to release a bat back into the wild. In most circumstances, an experienced carer can determine within six months whether this will be possible. If it becomes plain that a bat will never be fit for release, serious consideration must be given to its quality of life. Sometimes euthanasia will be the kindest option.

Sometimes, however, a bat appears able to have a good quality of life in captivity even though it is not fit to be released into the wild. In such a case, it *may* be appropriate to keep the bat in long-term care. This is not a decision to be taken lightly. Long-term captives require more sophisticated facilities than short-term convalescents. A bat that is capable of flight for any period should have access to a flight cage or other space where it can fly. Because bats are social animals, permanent residents should ideally be kept with other bats of the same species.

To keep a bat long term requires a licence from your SNCO (see below for details). If you do not want to obtain a licence to keep bats long term, or if you cannot provide a suitable environment, you should pass the bat on to another bat carer who does meet these requirements.

#### *England:*

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 you will have to apply for a licence from Natural England if you intend to keep bats long term. If a bat has not recovered sufficiently to be released after six months from the date on which it became captive, a licence should be obtained to retain the animal as a long-term captive or until it is well enough to be

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released. A quota of the maximum number of long-term captives that may be kept will be set out in the licence.

You can use this link to Natural England's website to find the EPS Possession Application form:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bat-licences>

## *Scotland:*

It is not an offence to tend a wild bat in Scotland, no matter how long the treatment takes, as long as you intend to release it eventually. When a bat has no prospect of release and will be used as an educational tool, a licence is required to possess it in long-term care under the science, research or education purpose. As soon as you decide that a bat can only have a future in captivity, please contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office for more information. The local SNH office may refer you on to the national licensing team, who can be contacted on [licensing@nature.scot](mailto:licensing@nature.scot).

## *Wales:*

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 you will have to apply for a licence from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) if you intend to keep bats long term. If a bat has not recovered sufficiently to be released after six months from the date on which it became captive, a licence should be obtained to retain the animal as a long-term captive or until it is well enough to be released. A quota of the maximum number of long-term captives that may be kept will be set out in the licence. Application forms can be found on their website at:

<https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/protected-species-licensing/european-protected-species-licensing/bat-licensing/?lang=en>

## *Northern Ireland:*

In Northern Ireland, bats are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Anyone can legally rescue and care for an injured bat as long as they release it at their earliest convenience, but keeping a bat for a longer period requires a licence. Please contact Dr Jon Lees at the Northern Ireland Environment agency on [Jon.Lees@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Jon.Lees@daera-ni.gov.uk) or 028 905 69551 for further information.

## *Moving between countries of the UK*

Licences issued by SNCOs are valid only in the part of the UK that the SNCO covers. If you have education bats or bats in long-term care and need to move from one country of the UK to another, you will need to obtain a possession licence from the SNCO in your new home. Please

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note that this may not be granted, particularly if the bat species is not normally found in the part of the UK you are moving to. If possible, we would encourage you to hand the bat(s) over to another carer near your old home. If you must take bats with you, we advise applying for a licence as far in advance of your move as possible.