

Bat Conservation Trust



Bat Rabies Related Disease Risk Management & the National Bat Helpline

Following the withdrawal of Defra funding for the BCT National Bat Helplines bat rabies related disease risk management work the way in which the National Bat Helpline will handle calls involving: 1. bat bites and scratches, 2. Suspected rabies cases, and 3. illegal landing cases is changing. This document provides a summary of what the National Bat Helpline will do in relation to such cases and what is no longer within our remit but now the responsibility of APHA. Please note this does not affect our work with APHA for the rabies passive surveillance service and the 'dead bat packs' we send out.

If you have any questions about the content of this document please contact the BCT Helpline (enquiries@bats.org.uk / 0345 1300 228).

Abbreviations used in this document:

BCT Bat Conservation Trust
APHA Animal & Plant Health Agency
PHE Public Health England

Situation	BCT/National Bat Helpline Activities	APHA Responsibilities
1. Bites, scratches or other contact cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain information on BCT website about rabies risk and what to do if bitten/scratched (with a link to the Public Health England (PHE) bats & Rabies leaflet) and contact details for APHA/relevant Government Agencies.• Check with caller if bitten or scratched and make aware of rabies risk.• Give immediate advice on washing wound and seeking medical advice from GP asap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive calls directly from public, gather all the information from the caller that is needed.• Refer callers to BCT regarding bat welfare, if they have not already called BCT, to find carer details.• Follow-up with caller / carer / vet if further information needed.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bat carer numbers for the care of the bat if the bat is not fit for release (or advise to take to a vet if no carers available). We will advise callers to inform carer or vet they have been bitten/scratched. If the bat is fit for release i.e. seen flying strongly very recently, we will advise they release the bat (for welfare reasons it should not be kept contained) and advise them to tell APHA that the bat was fit for release. • Refer the caller to APHA for the relevant country to report the incident. We will advise they pass on carer name and number or vet details to APHA should APHA need to ask them about the bat. • Follow up with an email to cover all the above summarised advice (with PHE leaflet attached). If the caller doesn't have email then we will deal with the bat care side of things and pass on the relevant APHA contact number. • Keep information on database of bat bite/scratch enquiry (we keep a record of all enquiries received). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform PHE.
2. Suspected rabies cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions of caller/ carer/ vet about behaviour or health of bat and what makes them think it could be rabies. Quite often it is obviously not and just a normal behaviour of a bat e.g. echolocating, warming up. • If cannot be ruled out that bat could have rabies, advise caller to inform APHA asap, giving relevant contact details and what to say. They will report as a 'notifiable disease'. • Advise to keep bat contained securely and in isolation from other animals. • If the bat dies advise to retain the body. Wearing gloves (separate from gloves used for other animals), double wrap the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive call from the person with the bat and discuss rabies risk and quarantine. • Arrange for a veterinary inquiry to take place; including a visit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ collect the bat if dead and send for testing; and ○ assess the bat if alive and decide whether it should be monitored further/ euthanised and sent for testing.

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	<p>bat and place it in a small sealed container in the fridge until able to speak to the APHA duty vet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up with an email to cover summarised advice. • Keep information on database of enquiry as with all enquiries. 	
<p>3. Illegal landing cases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask specific questions of caller to rule out any obvious assumptions it has come from abroad e.g. sometimes think there is a fruit bat in a tree and it is a toy or bat is in house and they think it is from abroad but no reason behind why this would be or clearly not from the country they think it is from. • If believed that the bat could possibly have come from abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advise caller on secure containment, gloves, check if bitten etc. Advise they must not release the bat even if it is fit and well. ○ Provide nearest carer name and number to ensure bat is cared for (and isolated from other bats in sturdy robust container). The caller will be asked to inform carer that bat may have come from abroad and provide the carer details to APHA. ○ Advise that the finder contact APHA directly to start off the process. ○ Inform caller that bats which are suspected illegal landings must not be removed from the site where they were found without prior agreement of APHA. ○ Carers should know the bats are not to be removed without agreement of APHA. They should also know to check the bat is securely contained and the container which holds the bat must itself be placed into another strong secure container which can hold the bat safely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the lead on the case: Investigate full details, assess and inform Trading Standards if necessary; • Liaise with the carer for species ID, likelihood of bat coming from abroad, consider if migratory or vagrant species etc. • Based on assessment from carer and discussion with them, decide on outcome for bat according to APHA illegal landing flowchart, discuss with/inform carer and organise e.g. quarantine at carer's property according to latest quarantine guidance for bats.

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	<p>and prevent it from escaping or coming into contact with other animals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Due to differences in anatomy between UK and foreign bat species, thick gloves are advised to prevent the risk of being bitten. ● Keep information on database of enquiry as with all enquiries. 	

Additional points to note

APHA illegal landing flowchart

The current APHA illegal landing flowchart needs to be updated to remove BCT's responsibilities and the one in circulation for APHA and Trading Standards staff should include consideration of species that are migratory (e.g. Nathusius' pipistrelle) or vagrant (e.g. parti-coloured bat, Khul's pipistrelle, Geoffroy's bat, etc.) that are able to get to the UK without assisted passage.

Consideration of transportation of bats

- There is a general licence (for England – NE licence 'GL25' and equivalent in Wales) that covers transportation of bats thought to have originated from abroad. BCT (and those including those working on our behalf) are named on this licence as the authorised persons who can use it. As we will no longer be liaising with APHA would this cover carers on our network directly (or indeed other bat carers who aren't registered with BCT). We are awaiting confirmation from APHA in relation to this.
- The 2010 Regulations 'tending' defence (permitting temporary possession or transport of a bat, without a licence), where such action is undertaken for welfare purposes, should cover carers transporting bats to their home and public moving bats to a vets practice once APHA has agreed. We are awaiting confirmation from APHA in relation to this.

Information about bat carers for APHA

We have asked APHA to make sure that their staff understand:

- Bat carers are volunteers and are not employed by BCT. They have agreed to be on our Bat Care Network and have agreed for their name and phone numbers to be given to the public where a bat is in need of care. Some may also work at rescue centre, vets, and animal hospitals.
- Bat carers have only agreed for their preferred name, preferred contact number to be given and passed onto APHA. APHA should not ask the member of public who has found the bat for more contact details. If that is needed e.g. in the case of assessing a bat which may have rabies virus, they will need to contact the carer on the number provided to ask them directly.
- Bat carers on the BCT Bat Care Network are well trained in the care of bats, follow good practice guidelines regarding rabies risk control including being fully rabies vaccinated.
- Bat carers rarely receive any funding to cover transport costs, feeding bats, maintaining bat housing etc. Often they will have other family commitments / work and bat care volunteering is an additional role. This should be a consideration whenever APHA wish to approach carers to be involved in collecting bats or providing quarantine facilities.
- There are bat carers around the country, which for a range of reasons, are not on the BCT Bat Care Network. For carers not on our network we have no knowledge of their vaccination status or training.