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BADGERS NEXT DOOR



This leaflet is an introduction to your new neighbours. Badgers are one of our most protected British mammals, but they are also relatively widespread. They are found most commonly in the countryside, but they also occur in towns and cities, where they make use of gardens, parks, golf courses and churchyards.

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Badgers are found throughout mainland Britain, although they are more common in the south and south west. They live in groups of 5 to 12 (including a number of males, females and young). They are nocturnal and spend the day underground in 'setts'. Badger setts consist of a number of entrance holes, which are connected by a maze of tunnels and chambers. They are omnivorous, eating a wide range of food such as earthworms, insect larvae, fruit, cereals and carrion.



Badgers and the Law

Under the **Protection of Badgers Act (1992)**, it is an offence to wilfully kill or injure a badger. Badger setts are protected against obstruction, destruction, or damage in any part, and the animals within a sett must not be disturbed.

Further Reading



Badgers - Michael Clark; Whittet Books
 ISBN 0-905483-65-0.

Badgers - Ernest Neal & Chris Cheeseman; Poyser Natural History; ISBN 0-85661-082-8.



Badgers and Development

Most developers have a responsible attitude to environmental issues. In the case of new developments, they will seek expert advice on the badgers before proceeding. In some cases, it is necessary to move the badgers to alternative setts, but in others the sett is considered so important it is left in place and the development designed around the badgers.

Most new developments try to take account of the badgers' need to travel from their setts to the surrounding areas to feed. Special badger corridors can be created, which are planted to resemble thick hedges allowing free movement for badgers and creating a valuable wildlife refuge. **These are vital to the badgers and should not be blocked with rubbish or garden refuse.**

Living Alongside Badgers



Badgers value the privacy of their setts greatly, and one of the hardest problems to solve when building houses near setts is maintaining the badgers' sense of security. Therefore, most badger sett areas are designed to discourage human access. **Please do not force entry into the sett area without good reason.** If you are interested in watching badgers, contact your local badger group

If the sett and pathways have been enclosed by special badger fencing, it is unlikely that you will meet your new neighbours. Even if your garden has no badger fencing it is unlikely that badgers will appear immediately, and even when they do many householders remain unaware that badgers use their gardens at all.



Feeding Badgers

Badgers make use of gardens and allotments to feed. They eat earthworms, slugs, beetle larvae, fruit (blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries), and some vegetables. If you wish to encourage badgers into your garden and you have secure fencing, you could try installing a badger gate or pipe (see section on fencing).

People who have badgers visiting their gardens each night, often start to feed them. This makes watching them much easier, and provides a great deal of enjoyment. Extra food can be invaluable to badgers during hot dry summers, and can increase the chance of survival of the cubs.

Badgers enjoy all sorts of kitchen scraps including tinned or dried dog food, acorns, blackberries, lightly boiled cheap cuts of meat, pears, plums, cheese, grapes, chopped apples, peanuts, carrots and cooked potatoes. Water should be provided in an upturned dustbin lid.

Sometimes, feeding badgers can create problems for your other (human) neighbours. There have been occasions where badgers attracted to one garden begin to damage

neighbouring ones! In summary, careful feeding can be beneficial; but are not carried away!

Living With Your New Neighbours



Gardens and allotments

Occasionally badgers dig up vegetables and bulbs. Small scrapes or latrines (small pits containing faeces) can appear in lawns. This activity is most common in the spring and autumn. Since it is limited, most gardeners find it easier to tolerate the nuisance, rather than prevent badgers coming into the garden. If necessary, an application of a short acting insecticide or vermicide will remove the insects or earthworms that are attracting the badgers into the garden.

However, such a treatment would also deny this food source to other birds and animals, and regular use may result in damage to the soil itself.

Use of a blood or bone-meal based fertilizer can encourage badgers and others (such as foxes and dogs) to dig out plants. This is because it smells like food, so use alternative fertilizers, if possible.

Badgers are strong animals, and can raid dustbins. To prevent this, the lid can be secured with an elastic strap, with a hook at each end (available from any bicycle/car shop).

Damage to gardens can also be the result of food shortages; particularly in hot dry summers when earthworms are difficult to find, and the cubs are newly weaned. One remedy may be to feed the badgers until the dry spell finishes.

Commercial mammal repellents (available from good garden centres) can be effective in the short term, although they need to be applied regularly, especially after heavy rain.

Never use chemicals such as diesel oil or creosote as this is illegal, and never use repellents near a sett without first obtaining a licence.

Fences

Where badgers enter gardens they may damage the fencing or create unsightly holes. Since badgers are good diggers and climb surprisingly well, fencing to keep badgers out needs to be strong. To deter badgers entirely requires a chain link fence dug into the ground or the use of a small electric fence (consult your local badger group).

Alternatively you can leave a hole in the fence or provide a badger gate or pipe. Badger gates are heavy enough to prevent small dogs etc. pushing through, but allow badgers access. A length of pipe 22cm diameter, set in the fence at the point where the badgers push through, will allow badgers access but prevent medium to large dogs escaping.

Very rarely, badgers can dig under sheds and outbuildings. This usually occurs when badgers have been using a garden for a period of years, and they gradually establish a new sett. If you are worried about any badger excavations affecting your property contact your local badger group or DEFRA (see further information)

Further Information



General information on badgers and links to other web sites.
www.badgers.org.uk

National Federation of Badger Groups

Cloisters Business Centre, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG. Tel: 020 7498 3220. **www.nfbg.org.uk**

English Nature

Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

Tel: 01733 340345. www.english-nature.org.uk

DEFRA (Dept. Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR
Tel: 020 7238 6000 (switchboard). www.defra.gov.uk