

OGB: Badger Rescue Protocol

1 Purpose

Badger welfare is the main aim of our charity. The rescue of badgers that are found to be in difficulty or injured is a vital activity. Our rescue service provides a valued and important service to anyone finding and reporting an incident. This protocol aims to ensure that volunteers can undertake badger rescue efficiently in a safe manner. It is based on the Secret World rescue and rehabilitation protocol (2018) which is recognised as setting out best practice.

Most of the common reasons for badgers coming into wildlife rescue centres are related to human activities. Individual badgers come into care for a variety of reasons; adults are usually injured due to road accidents, or being caught in snares, or may be found in domestic gardens and outbuildings suffering from territorial wounds. Cubs are usually orphaned, rather than injured. Many badgers that come in to captivity will be too injured, unwell, or old, for release back to the wild to be in their best interest. These animals must be euthanased to prevent suffering from protracted time in captivity. In common with other rehabilitated species around one third of adult badger casualties can be expected to be successfully returned to the wild.

2 Scope

This protocol covers badger rescue activities, from becoming aware of a badger in need of assistance through triage, capture and transport to a wildlife rescue centre. OGB is not involved in the treatment of badgers but may undertake / support release back into the wild. All rescue cases should be followed to resolution and reported.

3 Rescue teams

The badger rescue team is led by our vaccination and rescue coordinator. Interested volunteers will be interviewed and briefed on what is involved before being enrolled into our badger rescue WhatsApp group.

- Badgers should be retrieved by experienced rescue volunteers (OGB members), ideally working in pairs.
- Those without suitable training and experience must pass calls/ be backed up by experienced colleagues.
- Familiarise yourself with this protocol and using key rescue equipment kit (cage, grasper, pig board etc).
- Training is largely 'on the job' but also by following reports of rescues as they occur. You will have opportunities to assist experienced colleagues with rescue until you become experienced and confident.
- Always, put your own safety and that of others first i.e. before that of the badger. Perform a 'dynamic risk assessment' as the situation changes. Only continue so long as it is safe to do so.
- **Do not volunteer for rescue** if you are feeling unwell, are pregnant or are immunocompromised.
- Work within your own capabilities and experience in any rescue situation. Always ask for help if needed.

4 Legal basis of rescue

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (PoBA).

- Under the PoBA badgers can be taken from the wild for treatment with the intention of eventual release
- Permission should be gained from the landowner to access badger casualties
- There is no right of ownership of wild animals until taken into captivity at which point the finder may be considered to become the owner.
- Badgers being transported to vet or wildlife hospital, or release are subject to The Welfare of Animals (transport) order 2006. OGB protocols and equipment comply with this legislation (see Transport below).

5 Logging a badger rescue call out

Most calls come from members of the public who find casualties at the roadside, or in outbuildings. Any badger found in unnatural surroundings or behaving oddly above ground during daylight hours may be injured. Calls also come from our own volunteers who need assistance with rescue.

5.1 *If you take a rescue call out it is important to obtain and note:*

- the callers name and telephone number/ contact details
- The exact location of the badger (based upon both local landmarks and GPS findings if possible) This is so that someone can attend the incident. The EXACT location of a badger will be required to enable it to eventually be returned to the wild.
- Details of the situation and condition of the badger.
- Any concerns or other actions the caller has taken e.g. any other organisations contacted/ involved.

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5.2 *The caller should be reassured and informed:*

- that their own health and safety takes priority.
- To take sensible safety precautions (e.g. use of hazard warning lights on their car – as per RTA protocol).
- Not to touch the badger or get too close to it (unless it is a very small cub).
- If the badger is collapsed to cover it (keep warm) if possible.
- If in a building, they should be asked to close doors to trap the badger.
- To stay with it (if possible) until assistance arrives.
- If the badger becomes agitated or attempts to escape, to retreat and monitor from a safe distance.
- Their contact details will be passed on and they may be contacted by our responder (privacy).

5.3 *If the rescue incident call report suggests wildlife crime then:*

- The badger's welfare takes priority. Delays in responding to an incident should be avoided.
- Report the incident to the police, ideally before going out or as soon as is practicable afterwards.
- Obtain a police incident number by calling 101.
- If the incident is a crime in progress to call 999 and not to risk challenging the perpetrators.
- Take care not to disturb a possible crime scene or damage evidence essential to prosecution.

5.4 *Organising the rescue response*

- The aim is to ensure an experienced rescuer is notified and attends the scene as quickly as possible.
- We try to offer a 24/7 response to rescue call-outs.
- We have several members equipped and trained to perform rescue at key locations across Oxfordshire. Ideally the person nearest will take the case but this is not always possible.
- Post brief details of the call out on WhatsApp so anyone available within the rescue team can pick up.
- Once someone has accepted the call out give them the full details including the contact details of the caller. Offer support (e.g. notifying the police or arranging back-up) as needed.
- It may not always be possible to attend a rescue promptly – don't feel bad or pressured to attend.
- If you need help and advice call Debbie who is usually available.

5.5 *Escalating or transferring rescue*

- If the rescue is beyond OGB volunteer capability, then seek help from the RSPCA and/or emergency services.
- If outside our reasonable travel coverage area, try to transfer to a neighbouring badger group.

6 **Equipment & materials**

It is important to have the proper tools to retrieve an injured badger from various situations in a way that is both safe and welfare friendly. See equipment checklist, at Appendix 1. OGB will equip volunteers who attend call outs on a regular basis. Volunteers should keep the rescue equipment secure and be ready to deploy it rapidly. It must be returned to OGB on request (e.g. if needed elsewhere or if you leave the Group). It may be freely loaned to other rescue team members as needed.

7 **Health and Safety: biosecurity, COVID and personal security**

Rescue involves close contact with a wild animal that may be diseased / injured and is capable of causing significant injury. It may involve working in hazardous conditions. See the appended risk assessment for more detail. Follow current government COVID rules and guidance. All volunteers attending rescue must use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Latex gloves and mask should always be used when handling badgers as protection against potential zoonotic diseases. Hands / equipment should be cleaned using appropriate disinfectant.

Badger bites and scratches or serious bruising injury: If you are bitten or scratched then:

- Clean out the wound with soap/detergent ASAP (i.e. in the car before taking the badger to the vets).
- Apply antiseptic as soon as possible (i.e. on arrival at the vets).
- Obtain medical advice for any wound or serious bruise involving direct contact with a badger. The risk of infection is high. The wound should be deep cleaned and you may need antibiotics. We recommend going to A&E as soon as the rescue is complete.

Manual handling (OGB_027): Equipment is moderately heavy. Cage+adult badger may weigh 20kg. Share the load.

If anyone is injured or harmed (or there is a serious near miss) during rescue, please inform OGB without delay.

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8 Assessing the situation

Those going out to rescue badgers should always try and take someone with them and avoid 'lone working' wherever possible. **Badgers should be retrieved by experienced personnel only.** On arrival take your time, do not take risks. Quickly assess the situation from a distance and decide if it is necessary and practicable to attempt rescue.

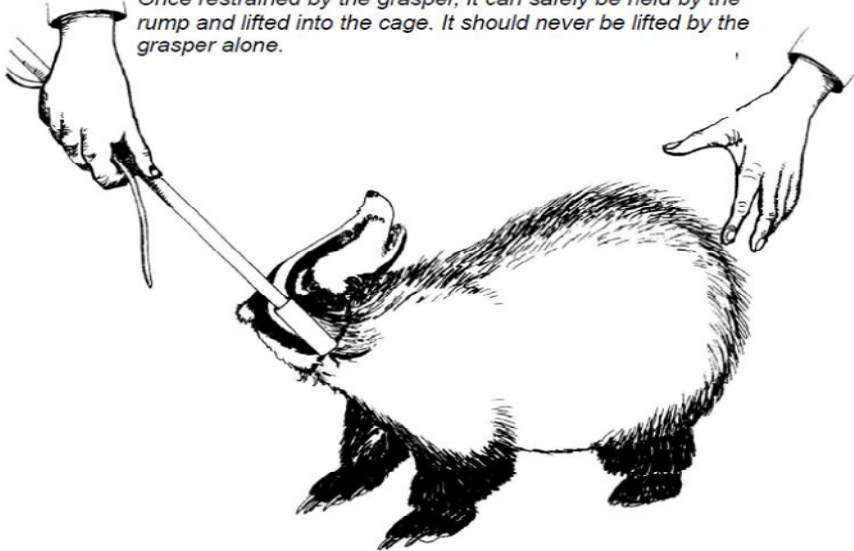
Appropriate precautions should be taken if the call out is to the roadside; leave car hazard lights on, use a warning roadside triangle and wear appropriate reflective clothing. Human health and safety must come first; ensure that all members of the public are safe from traffic and risk of other injury. Do not attempt rescue on a motorway or busy road without consulting the Police or Highways agency; it is illegal to stop on a motorway except in an emergency.

Appropriate equipment should be carried (Appendix 1). Approach the badger slowly, watching for any reaction. Remember that a badger is a wild animal and regards humans as a threat. Assume that all badgers are conscious and likely to respond to an approach. Be prepared to act quickly to avoid further injury to the badger or others. Assess whether or not rescue is needed and practicable. If planning capture, consider potential hazards and escape routes.

8.1 Unconscious badgers (e.g. RTA, collapsed) in the open

It is important to know if the badger is conscious and alive. The best way to do this is by touching it with a stick, starting from the hind-quarters and moving towards the head. Look for signs of movement and evidence of breathing. If the badger is unconscious (does not respond to touching with a stick) it can either be firmly grasped by the scruff of the neck (see Figure 4.2a), grasper or covered and rolled into a blanket. Support the back end (rump) when lifting to prevent aggravating possible injuries (Figure 4.2b). Do not lift by the tail as it may dislocate.

4.2a An injured but conscious badger should be lifted quickly into a carrying cage or dustbin with the aid of a dog grasper. Once restrained by the grasper, it can safely be held by the rump and lifted into the cage. It should never be lifted by the grasper alone.



4.2b A severely injured, unconscious badger may be lifted by grasping the scruff of the neck and the loose skin on the rump at the base of the tail



If the badger is conscious (responds to touching with a stick), but is not actively moving about, and the finder is confident enough, it can be grasped by the scruff of the neck. Another technique sometimes used by rehabilitators, is to tempt the badger to bite a glove, cloth or stout stick and to grasp it whilst it is distracted.

If there is any doubt about handling the badger then a grasper should be used (Figure 4.2a). It is not always easy to place a grasper over a badger's head. Holding a stick through the loop of a grasper which the badger can be tempted to bite can sometimes assist with the process, causing the badger to lift its head sufficiently to allow the grasper to be positioned. The grasper should then be lifted with the body supported at the same time by holding the rump and transfer into a secure container (Figure 4.2a). It is important to be firm, not to hesitate and not to give the badger the opportunity to bite.

Covering the head with a blanket throughout this procedure will help calm the badger. Rescue is stressful for them.

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8.2 Fully conscious and mobile badgers (trapped or contained vs free roaming)

Fully conscious and mobile badgers should be assessed with care. Decide if rescue is in the animal's interest. If you decide to monitor the situation then an OBG trail cam may be deployed.

If proceeding with rescue, block any means of escape using boards (minimum 1m high). Encourage the badger into a darkened container (e.g. a covered cage). Even if the badger appears uninjured, it should ideally be fully assessed before releasing it. Note: OBG has expertise and equipment to trap an injured badger if necessary. If so, one of OBG's trained trappers will place and set the cage. Once set to trap, the cage must be checked early next morning.

8.3 Snared badgers

Badgers caught in snares can sustain significant injuries. It is important that the badger is caught and not released before veterinary care can be provided. Further movement of the badger in the snare must be avoided either by pinning the badger down using a heavy blanket or by holding down the snare with a forked stick to restrict its movement. A steel bar 8-10mm diameter with a "pig tail" twist at the end, similar to old electric fence stakes, can be used to trap the snare wire and when slid along the wire towards the badger, will aid control.

Do not cut the snare from its fixture until the badger is secured, for example with a cage over it. Then transfer the badger to a secure cage. Even if the badger appears uninjured it should be examined by a veterinary surgeon; snare injuries may not be obvious even when considerable damage has been done. The snare should not be removed from the badger until the animal is anaesthetised by a veterinary surgeon. It is impossible to ascertain the level of injuries that may have been caused whilst the animal is conscious.

NB: Targeted snaring of badgers is illegal and should be reported to police.

8.4 Orphaned or injured cubs

The majority of badger cubs found in the wild by members of the public will need to be admitted as they are orphaned, have been injured, or are at risk. However, all cubs should be assessed before removal from the wild to confirm they need admission for specialist care. If a cub does need to be admitted to a wildlife centre, most can be covered with a blanket, picked up and placed into a suitable secure box or cage. It is important to log the EXACT location and details in order to assess if the cub can be returned to the natal sett.

Use OBG Badger cub rescue and assessment form (OGB_038) to record and check the cub's status.

9 Further handling

Once the badger is securely caged any further handling should be kept to a minimum.

- Do** Mark the spot where the badger has been picked up, for example, tie a string or a plastic bag around a nearby bush, tree, or a fence. This ensures the badger is released on familiar ground. Ensure any such marks are removed later. One spot on a country lane looks much the same as another in the dark.
- Do** **Take GPS coordinates (or What3words or equivalent) to confirm the location.**
- Do** Avoid unnecessary stress to the badger. During transportation, at a veterinary location, or whilst in care avoid contact with other animals or in close proximity. Keep noise to a minimum. Cover the cage as the badger will settle during transit if in a darkened cage. Keep the badger warm whilst allowing good ventilation.
- Do** Note the weight of the cage and any blankets/sheets, so that the badger can be weighed within the cage. Then subtract the weight of the cage etc. from the weight of the badger and cage. This vital information is needed to ensure the correct dosage of anaesthetic and drugs.
- Don't** Put blankets in a crush cage as this will stop the crush facility being used.
- Do** Liaise with a vet – call ahead to notify the wildlife facility to expect the badger (see contact list and details)
- Don't** Put yourself and others at risk.
- Don't** Put an apparently unconscious badger loose in the car.

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10 Transportation

Transportation of badgers, is regulated by the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order, 2006 (Chapter 3). Transport to a veterinary surgery is exempt. Transportation of the casualty to a wildlife rescue centre, or from a centre for release, may be considered to be controlled by the Order. It is advisable follow the general principles of the Order when transporting badgers, regardless of the situation, as the Order was written with animal welfare in mind.

The Order stipulates; the construction and use of receptacles in which animals are transported in respect of their suitability for the species, the ability of the animal to turn, stand and lie down, the provision of suitable ventilation and bedding, the appropriate provision of food and water, a means of inspection, and that the animal is not transported within sight of a natural predator. During any capture and handling general animal welfare legislation, such as the AWA, must also be adhered to.

Badgers, if correctly transported, travel well and settle in cages for long periods of time. However, the length of time badgers are kept in cages and the distances travelled should be as short as possible. Animals should not be left unattended in a vehicle at any time, for example during stops at service stations. Adequate ventilation must be provided including when the vehicle is stopped. Two people should be involved in transportation to ensure both human health and safety and animal welfare.

The cages provided by OGB are designed for the safe containment and transport of badgers. The cage should be lightly covered to reduce stress without hampering ventilation. Ideal transport vehicle temperature is 10-20°C.

11 Follow-up and record keeping

Following badger rescue, please follow-up with the wildlife centre for progress reports until the outcome is known. You should also inform the person who called in the case and thank them for their assistance.

Updates may be shared the Rescue WhatsApp group and on social media as appropriate. OGB follows best practice in keeping records of all rescue call outs, including who was involved, reasons for rescue and outcomes. A rescue report form (OGB_033 or OGB_038) should be completed for all cases where rescue was undertaken.

12 Badger release

We will gladly return a fully recovered badger to the wild if the welfare centre allows. Release should be ideally be performed by the volunteers who rescued the animal. The badger should be transported in a well ventilated, lightly covered cage as quickly and quietly as possible to the release site.

Adult badgers should be released at the point of capture. Releases should take place from dusk onwards. In built-up locations, or near busy roads, the release should be ideally timed for nights that are likely to be less busy and between midnight and dawn. On arrival at the release site the cage should be placed on the ground, still covered, to allow the badger time to adjust after the journey. The cage cover should then be removed and the badger allowed more time to take in sights and smells. Often the badger's reaction to this is to try and get out of the cage. Resist the temptation to talk to the animal, leave it for a period to acclimatise to the surroundings. When you feel happy that there is sufficient cover of darkness to release, open up the end of the cage and let the badger leave of its own free will, in its own time. Do not up-end the cage, the badger will leave when it feels safe to do so.

A badger should never be emptied from a cage into a sett entrance, even if it is known to belong to that sett. If setts are present on both sides of a road the badger should be released so it is able to choose to go in either direction. Usual safety precautions apply. **Note:** if releasing onto a dangerous road inform the police first.

13 Related & reference documents

Rescue report form (adult badger)	OGB_033
Badger cub rescue and assessment form	OGB_038
RTA/ Dead Badger reporting	OGB_031
Manual Handling Guide	OGB_027
Rescue contacts	https://www.oxonbadgergroup.org.uk/report/emergencies/

The Badger Rehabilitation Protocol (2018) edit. Liz Mullineaux, supported by Defra, Secret World Wildlife Rescue and the Badger Trust is available at: <https://www.secretworld.org/wildlife-resources>

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14 Change Log

Not applicable, this is the first formal rescue protocol.

15 Appendix 1: Rescue equipment checklist

Oxfordshire Badger Group currently has 8 volunteers who hold a set of rescue equipment. They are supported by several other rescue team members. Their mobile phone details are in WhatsApp.

Equipment

1. Badger holding cage
2. Grasper with quick release
3. Badger (pig) board or similar wooden board
4. High power torch
5. Head torch*
6. Thick dark blankets or towels*
7. Scissors*
8. Wire cutters
9. First aid kit
10. Waterproof 'boot liner' for car transport
11. Black bag for clinical waste*
12. Long thick stick for badger to bite on while grasper is put around badgers' neck*
13. High Viz jacket
14. Hazard triangle*
15. Camera/ Mobile/ GPS*
16. Large Landing net* (available from fishing suppliers)
17. Road/ OS maps for finding your way to/ from the rescue location*
18. OBG Business cards*
19. Pen/ note book or digital equivalent*

Two way radios, trail camera and badger traps are available on request from OBG but are not standard issue.

* Not provided by OBG

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning materials

- Disposable gloves
- Mask* i.e. standard Covid mask- type you wear in to a shop)
- Spray bottle containing 70% alcohol hand sanitizer
- Universal disinfectant spray (e.g. dilute Safe 4)*
- Disinfectant wipes (e.g. Clinell)
- Paper towels (to clean car & equipment)

* Not provided by OBG

Documentation

Please complete the badger rescue form or cub assessment form and return it as soon as possible after the rescue.

We recommend keeping a copy of this protocol with your rescue equipment.

Current rescue team contact details are held in the WhatsApp group.

Rescue contact details can be saved to your phone and wildlife centres to your satnav.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the Badger Trust who awarded a generous Clare Hammacott grant to equip our rescue team in 2019.

OGB: Badger Rescue Risk Assessment

Protocol and Risk Assessment completed by: Linda Ward & Debbie White on 11th May 2021.

Issue date: 11th May 2021 Review date: - 2 years

Reviewed and approved by OGB Committee.

Scope: Badger rescue, including travel. Unlike 'planned fieldwork' rescue calls can come at any time of day or night. The location of the rescue will probably be unfamiliar. It may be difficult to access and work in. Rescue involves working with a distressed, potentially dangerous wild animal and possibly directing members of the public.

Hazard	Risks	Controls
Animal welfare is key work in the pandemic	COVID when working in pairs for rescue and contact with other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID Safety Precautions as per current government guidance • See also https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/advice-for-badger-groups
Rescue field work environment: Is more likely than usual to involve getting to and working in unknown/ difficult terrain, in low light levels and possible poor weather conditions. Rescues are infrequent and each is different. It is difficult to become well practiced.	Rescuing an injured or distressed badger may involve working in more hazardous field conditions than is normal. The likelihood of risks happening is higher (High, moderate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in pairs with at least one person being experienced in rescue. • Rescue volunteers should be reasonably physically fit and experienced in fieldwork. • Remember your duty not to put yourself or others in danger. • Assess conditions before accepting a call out. Monitor the situation. Only proceed if it is safe for you and others to do so. Be prepared to abandon or delay the rescue if necessary. • Wear appropriate clothes (think brambles, nettles etc). • Use the equipment provided and work in pairs if possible. • Work carefully and avoid rushing.
Lone working may be unavoidable.	Increases likelihood of risks happening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only very experienced rescuers may work alone. • Always ensure someone knows your plans. Obtain remote OGB backup (via mobile phone/ WhatsApp) and report in periodically.
Slips & trips – most common cause of injury	Risk of slipping or tripping may be higher during badger rescue depending on the environment. The badger may move suddenly and startle you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear suitable footwear e.g. walking boots. • Take care to specifically assess the ground for obstructions and move these if possible. • Be alert to loose or slippery conditions, steep or uneven areas etc. • Plan your route for moving around safely.
Manual handling. Rescue equipment is moderately heavy (cage and pig board ~ 7kg each, adult badger 12kg)	Risk of strains and sprains when lifting and carrying the equipment and a badger. Risk increased if carrying for some distance or if necessary to lift over fences, styles etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescue volunteers to see Manual Handling Guide (OGB_027). • Leave as much kit as possible in the car. • Work in pairs and share the load. • Rest as necessary.

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Hazard	Risks	Controls
Using cutting tools.	Risk of cuts (e.g. wire/ bolt cutters/ scissors) or bruising if mishandled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care to use equipment carefully and correctly.
Chemicals: Use and handling of SAFE4 or similar disinfectant	Diluted disinfectant supplied to volunteers may cause harm if spilt onto the skin, eyes or swallowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and follow the product safety precautions- these are for Safe4 • Avoid direct contact with the substance. Avoid skin and eye contact. Do not eat, drink or smoke when using this product. • If IN EYES: Rinse cautiously with water for several minutes. Remove contact lenses, if present and easy to do. Continue rinsing. • If ON SKIN: wash with plenty of soap and water. • If SWALLOWED: Rinse mouth. Do not induce vomiting. • Get medical advice if irritation persists or you are unwell.
<p>Biohazards when handling or transporting any injured or distressed wild animal.</p> <p>Badgers can carry infectious diseases e.g. bTB</p> <p>The animal may be bleeding, urinate or defecate during rescue.</p>	<p>Risk of infection due to exposure to hazardous micro-organisms</p> <p>Open cuts and grazes may increase the risk of infection.</p> <p>Pregnant women and immunocompromised people are at greater risk of infection generally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks to be worn during rescue and transport. • Disposable gloves to be worn when handling the badger or using equipment that touches the badger. • Cover cuts or abrasions on exposed skin with waterproof dressings. • Personal hygiene matters. Wash hands thoroughly after the rescue & before eating or drinking. • Basic First Aid kits are provided. First aid training is recommended, • Supply disinfectant that is effective against bacteria and viruses. • PPE and disposables used during rescue to be disposed safely (ideally hand to rescue center). • Treat all equipment as potentially contaminated after use. This includes car boot area used for transport and surfaces touched with disposable gloves. Clean everything thoroughly (wearing mask, gloves) as soon as possible afterwards i.e. before storage. • Vulnerable volunteers should not to take part in badger rescue. • Volunteers who handle many rescues are advised have up to date BGC vaccination, if unsure check with your GP.
Badger bites and scratches	A badger will try to defend itself and can inflict severe bites and /or scratches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescue protocols are designed to minimize this risk. • If bitten or scratched clean the wound and get medical care ASAP.

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Hazard	Risks	Controls
Bystanders	May hamper rescue or put themselves at risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite and calmly assertive at all times. • Minimise the number of people who approach the badger. • Ask bystanders to be quiet, keep well back & stay safe. • They can help as appropriate (e.g. calling the rescue centre/ police).
Emotional distress	<p>It may not be possible to rescue the animal.</p> <p>Most (2 out of 3) rescued badgers will not survive.</p> <p>Rescue may be physically and mentally demanding. It can involve unsociable /out of hours working. It may be necessary to drive some distance to complete the rescue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer rescue work is entirely a matter of personal choice. • There is no pressure to accept a call out or blame if you cannot complete or attend a rescue. • Your friends and colleagues understand the pressures and will always be supportive and appreciative of your contribution. • Know your own limits and work within them. Don't be tempted to take any risks with your own safety or that of others.