

BADGER CRIME / SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT PROTOCOL



Crimes against badgers and other wildlife, including fox hunting and hare coursing are known to take place in Oxfordshire. The level of crime reported is quite low and it is difficult to know if this is a true picture or due to under-reporting.

The aim of this protocol is to help ensure that any badger crime or suspicious incidents are reported promptly and effectively so that they can be acted on and followed up.

Crime to Badgers and their setts can include:

- Any interference to setts e.g. filling in, this can be all the entrances or a just a few
- Destroying or damaging a sett, eg. ploughing over or dumping something on top trapping the badgers.
- Killing badgers without a licence
- Taking badgers for use in baiting or fighting
- Sending dogs into a sett and digging out an animal from a badger sett
- Snaring a badger or setting snares on badger runs

NB ploughing over may be permitted under licence from Natural England, but for our purposes it should be reported as a possible crime.

Fox hunting

During the hunting season badger setts are at much higher risk and need checking regularly. Hunting takes place from mid-August to 1st November (cubbing) followed by fox hunting through to mid/end of March after which there is a 4 month summer respite.

Throughout the countryside individuals, often terrier men will be out early in the morning prior to a hunt meet, blocking up badger setts. This is to stop the quarry, escaping down the hole and ruining the chase. Often digging out will take place if a fox does escape into a badger sett. Digging out is where members of the hunt, usually terrier men, dig out the fox in order for the chase to continue. Not only is this cruel but it is also illegal as badger setts are protected by law.

Reporting to the police

If you are out in the countryside and witness a wildlife crime or a suspicious incident you should report it promptly to the police. You will need to give a **grid reference or what3words location (many police forces are moving to What3words)**. There are other apps that can be downloaded to smart phones.

- **If the crime is in progress: call 999.** E.g. seeing anyone attempting to block a sett. Consider your own safety and do not challenge them unless you are in company and are confident it is safe to intervene.
- **If the crime has happened: call 101.** E.g. discovering a blocked badger sett.
- **Always make sure you ask for and write down the crime number.**
- **Take photos/ videos if possible. Do not interfere with the crime scene.**

Additional reporting and further information

Always report to the **Badger Trust** using the online form: <https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/report>

If the crime is in **Oxfordshire** please report the sett to us via OBG@oxonbadgergroup.org.uk

The League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) has its own reporting system called Animal Crimewatch. It is a confidential hotline where you can report cruelty to animals in the name of sport by telephone, email or using the online form. www.league.org.uk

Check out the Badger Persecution Priority Group (BPPDG). The Badger Trust and the League are members. This is a partnership with other groups and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. It meets quarterly to tackle Badger persecution across the UK. <https://www.nwcu.police.uk/how-do-we-prioritise/priorities/badger-persecution/>

Support, training and feedback

OBG has a number of members who are experienced in attending and reporting wildlife crime. We know that it can be a hassle and intimidating to report crime to the police. If you want any advice or support in deciding whether or how to report do get in touch with us.

We are working with the Badger Trust crime officer to monitor how promptly and effectively the police respond to wildlife crime reports in Oxfordshire. Please feedback any concerns (or praise) to us.

OBG uses the wildlife crime training courses provided by the Badger Trust Wildlife Officer. These are organised periodically. We can ask for a course if there is sufficient demand. We recommend all volunteers attend the course and consider periodic refreshers. If you are interested in attending please email OBG@OxonBadgerGroup.org.uk to request a place on the next event.

Examples of blocked setts

