

Teachers: Please vet this page before allowing students to access it. Some of the material below is graphic and upsetting.

Badger Problems!

Badgers are great to see in the environment. They are an important animal in the **biodiversity** of our **fauna**. However, like most things, they don't come without their problems. We'll look at a few here.

Persecution: Many badgers die each year because of persecution from people who see them as a threat, or just a good day's 'sport'.

1. **Badger digging and baiting:** Around 10,000 badgers each year die after being dug and baited. What do we mean by this? Badgers are often dug from their setts and killed – either on the spot or later, when they are attacked by dogs. Both the badgers and the dogs suffer terrible injuries. Durham Badger Group works closely with the police and the RSPCA to try to stop these horrific crimes, or to bring the criminals to justice. Badger persecution is a serious offence, which can lead to a large fine and even imprisonment.
2. **Some badgers are still killed and injured by shooting.** This often happens when people are 'lamping' at night. A strong lamp is used to dazzle animals, which are then shot.
3. **Lots of badgers die each year in snares.** These are loops of strong wire into which an animal walks. As the animal struggles to get free, the snare tightens and causes terrible injuries to animals before they die. Sadly, some snares, (free-running snares), are still legal in this country. The Badger Group are trying to get all snares banned by law. (See www.badgertrust.org.uk) If you see a snare in the countryside, **DO NOT TAKE IT AWAY.** That way you will be committing theft. **DO NOT DAMAGE OR CUT THE SNARE.** You will be committing criminal damage. Simply **RUN THE SNARE DOWN AS FAR AS IT CAN GO.** That way, it is harmless. If you see snares you think are illegal, please report them to your local badger group and/or the police.
4. **Every year some badger setts are damaged.** It is highly illegal to damage a badger sett! However, chemicals and other nasty things are often pumped into setts to drive off or kill the badgers. When sett entrances are blocked by stones or other heavy material, the badgers become trapped inside and die underground.

Bovine TB (bTB): For many years, thousands of badgers have died to try to wipe out bovine TB. (**Tuberculosis**). We do know that badgers carry bTB, but then, so do many other animals. Many scientists believe that cattle are really to blame for spreading this horrible disease, when farmers buy and sell them at markets. bTB is spread by **bacteria**, which can live in the soil. Farmers often blame badgers for spreading the bacterium in their dung. However, experts tell us that cattle will not feed near to badger dung pits. On the other hand, badgers like nothing better than to root under cow pats for grubs and worms. Most bTB is in the wetter western parts of the country.

5. **The Roads:** Around 50,000 badgers every year are killed on Britain's roads. (We don't know how many more are badly injured and die later.) That would be the same as one person from *every family in Britain* dying on the roads *every year!* Local badger group can rescue some of the injured ones. We also work with the local councils to erect warning signs, badger fences and, sometimes, underpasses on busy roads. However, these things are expensive. If you are out in the car with your family, persuade them to drive carefully to avoid badgers crossing the road.
6. **Rescue and Rehabilitation:** **Badger Groups, the Badger Trust, the RSPCA and Secret World Wildlife Rescue** www.secretworld.org work together to care for injured and orphaned animals, so that they can be released back into the wild. Go to the Secret World website to see what they do.
7. **Building:** Lots of building development goes on every year. Our expanding population demands new houses, shops, offices and factories. **Setts** are often destroyed and the badgers lose their foraging grounds. Badgers live in territories, and can't just move out and live somewhere else. The Badger Group carries out many surveys every year to find where badgers will be affected by development. We provide information to anyone who wants to build on land. If your family want to carry out some building, they would be wise to contact their local Badger Group for help. That way, they can avoid a large fine for damaging a sett! **The laws on development** are strict!

Look up some of the items in blue and explore them for further information.

www.badger.org.uk www.durhamcountybadgers.co.uk www.rspca.org.uk

www.durham.police.uk www.durhamwt.co.uk

Durham Badger Group 2010 (Thanks to The Badger Trust for some information.)