

PEST CONTROL SERVICE

Pest Information Leaflet No. 12

BADGERS



Description

Badgers are easily identifiable by their low slung bodies, relatively small eyes and ears and their characteristic black and white striped faces. Also noticeable are long front claws which provide the badger with an excellent digging ability as well as an effective self-defence weapon. The only species living wild in the United Kingdom is the European Badger, which can measure up to 31" in length.

Biology and Habit

A badger spends most of its day asleep underground in a maze of tunnels called a sett. Badgers are social animals and one social grouping will occupy a single sett. Although badgers can mate in any month of the year, only one litter is born in the spring, due to the unusual phenomenon of delayed implantation of the fertilized egg. A sow badger can potentially give birth to a litter of five cubs, although the average number is normally two.

In close proximity to the sett will be a latrine where the badgers leave dung and urine. Latrines are also sited markers on the boundaries of social groups' feeding territories which may include various types of areas such as pasture, arable fields, gardens etc. Latrines can extend for several square metres and can be a source of annoyance to homeowners.

It is commonly perceived that a badger is a nocturnal creature, however, their activity is dictated by that of their main food sources. These include earthworms, beetles or a generous

homeowner who will leave scraps in the garden. It is quite usual to observe badgers wandering above ground in late afternoon/early evening. However, their eyes are not suited to bright sunshine and their heavy coats are not appropriate for warm, daylight hours.

Importance

Certain people find badgers fascinating creatures and will freely feed them. However, they do have a nuisance value. Subsidence to driveways, carefully tailored lawns and structural damage to foundations are a result of the badgers excellent digging ability. They have also been known to ravage agricultural crops and allotments in the search of an alternative source of food.

Control

It is **illegal** to use creosote or any other form of chemical preparation to deter badgers from entering property. A number of options are, however open which either singularly or together may achieve this objective.

Try to isolate the food source to which badgers are attracted, e.g. use a garden pesticide to remove the preferred diet of earthworms and beetles. Deter them from digging up gardens by laying fine wire mesh over the lawn. The installation of an electric fence could protect the whole garden. If such a fence is fitted it should comprise two strands of wire; the lower strand should be hung approximately 8 cm from the ground, with the second strand approximately 10 cm above this. It

need only be switched on at night, but it is important to ensure that a high voltage is maintained and that the vegetation under the fence is kept cropped short to prevent earthing of the current. Alternatively you may prefer to employ proprietary badger fencing which comprises welded mesh supported by timber posts.

Legislation

UNDER THE PROTECTION OF BADGER ACT 1992 IT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE TO WILFULLY KILL, INJURE, TAKE, CRUELLY ILL TREAT OR OFFER FOR SALE A LIVING BADGER. IT IS ALSO AN OFFENCE TO DAMAGE A BADGER SETT OR ANY PART OF IT; TO DESTROY A BADGER SETT; TO OBSTRUCT ACCESS TO, OR ENTRANCE OF, A BADGER SETT; TO CAUSE A DOG TO ENTER A BADGER SETT OR DISTURB A BADGER WHEN IT IS OCCUPYING A BADGER SETT.

Further Advice

For more specific information to that detailed above contact the Avon Badger Group, c/o RSPCA 78 Gloucester Road, Bristol BS7 8BN - telephone (01179) 604453 or ADAS at Burghill Road, Westbury on Trym, Bristol, BS10 6YW - telephone (01179) 591000.

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- " 12 Badgers
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