

The Bat Conservation Trust



**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



**Bat related enquiries:
advice to give to a non bat-worker**

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Introduction

People answering calls should be trained and know about bats and their behaviour. They should also be familiar with the U.K. network of bat groups, bat carers and the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations.

You should keep with this guidance note an up to date list of relevant people and telephone numbers.

You should use this document in conjunction with Procedures A to D. When you take a call, the flow charts will guide your decision making, based on the situation of the caller; these cover most situations. However, you may need to give different advice in some circumstances. These are covered in this document. Throughout the call you should keep in mind the general principles of Section 1.

Familiarise yourself with Sections 1 and 2 and all four procedures before you use them.

SECTION 1

Overall principles

1. You must at some point in the conversation ensure the caller has not been bitten or scratched by the bat, or come into such close contact that saliva may have got on to a person's mucous membranes. **Whenever possible, bats should only be handled when there is no alternative.** In these procedures *bitten** should be taken to mean **"bitten, scratched or had saliva in contact with mucous membranes"**. A suitable speech may run as follows

" If you do need to handle the bat we recommend that, as with any wild animal, you wear protective gloves so that you are not bitten or scratched. A tiny number of bats in the U.K. have been found to carry bat rabies, and as a responsible organisation we don't wish to anyone to put themselves at risk."

If they have been bitten, you should follow the flow chart "For use when someone has been bitten* by a bat" (Procedure C)

2. If the person taking the call believes from their assessment of the caller that there is any likelihood the caller may come into close contact with the bat, advise the caller to keep the bat away from their face.
3. With all calls you answer, you have discretion about the best way to deal with the situation and for dealing with each caller. For example, in situations where it is obvious to you that the "box method" of picking up a bat is not feasible, you have the discretion to advise the caller to pick up the bat using protective gloves.

4. You must record all bat calls in the casework recording system. This is invaluable for the collection of data on the scale of demand for such services, and for reference in case the advice given to the caller needs to be traced.
5. Although specific risks are indicated throughout please note that anyone who has a bad experience with a bat is less likely to be supportive of bat conservation, so the risk to bat conservation is present all the time.
6. In cases where the you feel that the call requires more detailed knowledge than you have, you may contact the following people.

Public health issues Professor Bill Reilly
 Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health (SCIEH)
 0141 300 1100

Maggie Tomlinson
 Department of Health
 020 7972 5136

Animal health issues Divisional Veterinary Manager (part of Defra in Scotland)
 See phone book under Scottish Executive Environment and Rural
 Affairs Department – Animal Health Office Division

Anna Guitton / Paul Manser
 DEFRA Veterinary Exotics Diseases Division
 0207 904 6000 (10am – 6pm)

Initial bat care principles

1. If it is necessary to contain a bat, for example if it is found during the day and needs to be kept until dusk before it is released, then it must be kept in a box with airholes in the lid and some crumpled cloth in the corner for the bat to hang from or hide in. The bat must also be given water and this can be done by providing a piece of soaked material or sponge in an upturned shallow jam jar lid. This ensures that the bat is as comfortable as possible while it is in captivity, and will not be stressed.
2. To release a bat from a container put the container outside on its side with the open side enabling the bat to leave the box. The box should be on a level surface in a sheltered position, out of the reach of predators and passers-by. The level surface should be as high as possible – at least five feet from the ground, and callers should stay to make sure it flies off and doesn't just flop to the floor. If it does flop to the floor advice should be given from Procedure B box B9
3. To release a bat from a towel, place it outside on a level surface and slowly remove the towel or cloth. If the bat is clinging to the towel or cloth, pull back the edges so the bat can see a way out and crawl free. Again, if it does not take off successfully follow Procedure B from box B9
4. Differentiate between finding the bat during the day and finding it at night. If it is at night you can release it straight away; if it is during the day you should wait until the sun goes down, otherwise you are making the bat more vulnerable to predators as it is against its

natural behaviour. If however you *have* to release it during the day, ensure you place it high up and in a sheltered position away from direct sunlight and predators.

5. If on the evening when you are going to release the bat there is strong wind, heavy rain or the temperature is cold, then do not release the bat but keep it until an evening when the weather is more clement.

SECTION 2

Scenarios

1. **If someone has been bitten* by a bat**, you should follow the flow chart “For Use When Someone has been Bitten* by a Bat” (**Procedure C**)
2. **Someone phones in and thinks they have found a rabid bat**. Follow **Procedure B**, and advise the caller to phone their local veterinary surgery, as the duty vet will contact the Animal Health Divisional Office. Rabies is a legally notifiable disease, so this must be done without delay.
3. **Bat flying in room – go to Procedure A**
4. **Bat settled on floor or horizontal surface – go to Procedure B from box B2**
5. **Where a bat is clinging to a vertical surface** such as curtains or a wall (in cases where the wall is indoors, or if it is outside but low enough to the ground to be vulnerable to predators).
Advise in this situation to wear protective gloves to pick up the bat. If the bat is on a curtain the caller could consider holding the curtain so it is horizontal while putting the box over the bat and sliding thin cardboard underneath, although this may take two people, and with a wall you certainly couldn't do this. If the bat cannot grip on to the cardboard that you slip under the box (maybe the cardboard is too smooth?) the bat will slip nose down to the bottom of the box, which may cause it distress. Once the bat is contained follow **Procedure B** from **box B3**
6. **If you do not believe that that the caller can deal with the situation in a safe way** (is panicking, or is in a situation without suitable protective gloves/towels) to carry out the advised course of action, pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker (**Procedure B box B8**).
7. **If someone has found a dead bat** see **Procedure C** from **box C5**
8. **If someone has a query about their roost and rabies – see Procedure D (Box D7** for those who wish to have their roost tested for rabies)
9. **Bat in a warehouse**
If possible follow **Procedure A** or **Procedure B**. If this is not possible – for example the bat has settled out of reach - pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker.
9. **Bat in shipment of goods**
See **Procedure B**, but **do not advise B10**, as it is best that the bat be assessed by an experienced bat worker, so pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker
10. **Bat in a school**

Advise them to follow **Procedure A** or **Procedure B**, depending on the circumstance, but always pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker Explain that the risks are minimal, but that if any child has been bitten* should follow **Procedure C**. Offer to send children's bat info relevant for the age range.

The following scenarios presume the caller is prepared to handle the bat. This means that the risk presented is potentially higher.

11. Person has found a grounded or injured bat when they are on a walk e.g. no gloves/ boxes available.

- i) If it is feasible then wrap the bat in an item of clothing such as a jumper so it can be taken home where it can be put into a box and a vaccinated carer** called (**Procedure B**).
- ii) If they put the bat in a box on the walk then they should follow **Procedure B** from box **B3**
- iii) If the person is a long way from anywhere and it will take several hours to get home they might still be willing to try the above.
- iv) If not, and the bat is on the ground you could suggest that they scoop it up in an item of clothing and put it high up, for example on a tree, where at least it will be out of the way of predators.
- v) If they left the bat where it was, it might be possible to get a vaccinated carer** to investigate.

12. Fly or coarse fishermen with a bat caught on the line

This call is likely to be taken at dusk or later, when it is most difficult to get help to someone. The fisherman should assess how far the hook has gone in, as far as possible without touching the bat. If they do need to handle the bat to assess this they should wrap as much of the bat as possible in a cloth (esp. the head and mouth). If they have protective gloves with them they should put them on. If the hook is not in too deep try to remove it and release the bat (**Procedure B** from **B10**) ; if it is deep or they are not prepared to do this then cut the line and put the bat into a box. Put the bat in carefully, unfurling the clothing around it carefully and doing the head last. Then advise them to follow **Procedure B** from **box B9**.

13. Bat on flypaper

Wearing protective gloves, cut the fly paper down and cut away as much as possible of the paper without unduly distressing the bat. Follow **Procedure B** from **box B9**

14. Bird ringers have caught a bat in their mist net

Extraction of a bat from a mist net is a delicate operation, and careful attention must be paid to the type of gloves that are worn. The ringer must weigh up the flexibility of the gloves for the task, as gloves that are too thick will hamper the attempts to disentangle the bat, but the ringer must feel confident that the gloves are thick enough to prevent him/ her being bitten by the bat. The extraction of the bat must follow in reverse stages to which it became entangled, and any bat not disentangled within two minutes should be cut free. Once the bat has been freed **Procedure B** should be followed from **box B5**.

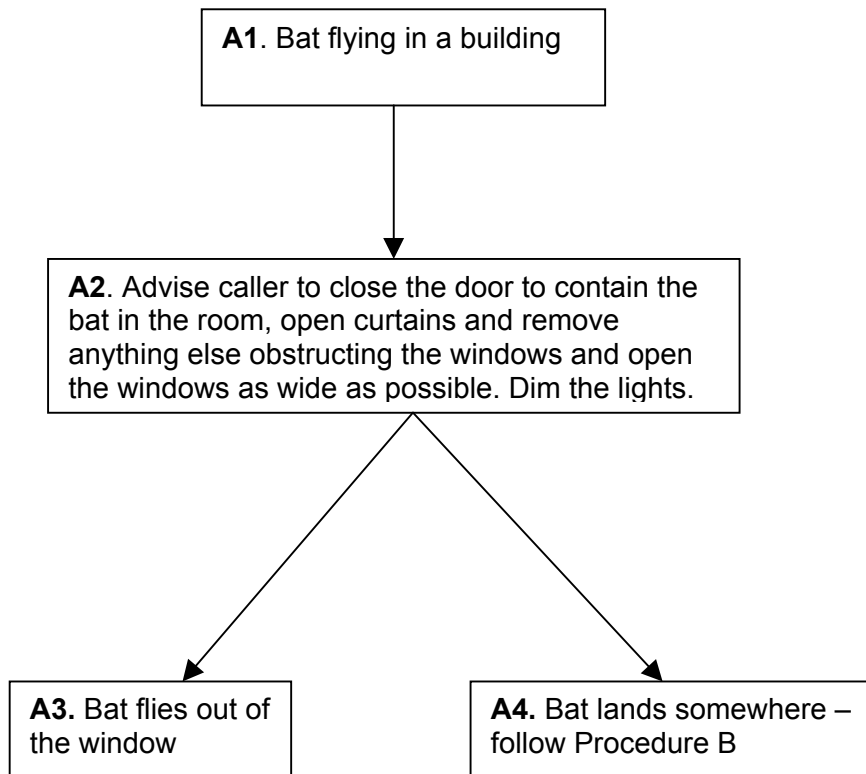
Section 3

Procedures



Procedure A

Flow Chart for Actions to Follow when Caller Reports Bat Flying in a Building



B1. Person phones up having found a grounded bat.
INITIAL RISKS Member of public being bitten* by bat.
Bat being left in a distressed state due to inability/ fear of caller
Bat at risk from predators

B2. Bat is still on ground, or caller has contained the bat without having to touch it e.g. put a box or flowerpot over it.
RISK bat still possibly at risk from persistent predators
Bat might escape from containment

B3. Caller has put bat in box. Indicates willingness and capability to deal with situation, rather than wanting someone to come out.
RISK Caller may not have worn protective gloves to put bat in box

B4. Caller unwilling to deal with bat / you do not feel that they would be competent.
RISK bat may bite caller due to unconfident or unsympathetic handling

B5. Caller indicates capability and willingness to deal with the situation

B6. Is there anyone else around willing to help them deal with the bat?

B7.
Yes

B8. No
RISK bat may bite caller due to unconfident or unsympathetic handling
Bat may escape if left under the box

B9. Ensure bat is protected from predators – it is covered with a strong box with airholes in it. Consider asking the person to put a piece of material soaked in water in a shallow dish/ jam jar lid under the box with the bat, and to wear protective gloves to do this. Pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker
RISK MINIMISATION ACHIEVED
1) Caller has not had enough contact with bat to get bitten*, and has worn gloves when near it.
2) Expert who will deal with situation is vaccinated
3) Bat still at risk from persistent predators until SNH Batworker arrives, but attempt has been made to make it safe and comfortable.

B10. If the bat is injured, advise on how to make it comfortable and pass the caller's details to an SNH Batworker. **Remember to tell caller to wear protective gloves if they need to handle the bat**
RISK MINIMISATION ACHIEVED
1) Person will now wear gloves so will not get bitten*
2) Bat is safe and comfortable thus less likely to get stressed and bite.
3) Expert help is on the way

B11. If the bat appears healthy and chirpy (chat with caller to ascertain this) give advice to caller of how to care for it during the day and release it that evening. **Remember to tell caller to wear protective gloves if they need to handle the bat**
RISK MINIMISATION ACHIEVED
1) Person will now wear gloves and not get bitten*
2) Bat will be safe and comfortable for the rest of the day.
3) By asking confident people to deal with the bat themselves you are reducing risk of burn out for bat workers

Procedure C
Flow Chart for Use When Someone has been
Bitten* by a Bat

C1. Person calls in with grounded/ injured bat, and it transpires that it has bitten* someone
RISK Potential that the bat has rabies and the person is at risk

C2. Advise person that after phone call has finished the bitten person must wash the wound with soap and water and then phone the doctor to discuss post exposure treatment. Ascertain where the bat is now.
RISK The risk of rabies is present if the person does not have post exposure treatment

C3. Bat is contained in a box.
RISK If bat is not cared for by experienced person it could become distressed.

Follow procedure B from B3

C4. Bat is around but is not contained.
**RISK Bat at risk from predators
 Bat might need to be examined by bat carer**

Follow Procedure B from B2

C5. Bat is dead

C7. Give details of local group who can then send the bat on to VLA
RISK MINIMALISATION ACHIEVED
 1) Individual at risk seeks post exposure treatment.
 2) Bat is tested by VLA, increasing the amount of data collected about bats and rabies.

Procedure D
Flowchart for use when Roost Owners Call in with Rabies Queries

