



Bats and Pest Control

This leaflet is designed for those who need to carry out pest control where bats roost, or are suspected to roost. If you require further information after reading this leaflet, please contact the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT).

Unlike rodents, wasps and cluster flies, bats are not pests and are in need of your help. Bats are often found using buildings for roosting, particularly as their natural roosting places in tree holes and caves become scarcer as they are destroyed or disturbed. Bats can use all areas of a building, however they are most commonly found in the walls, eaves and roofs. Bats and their roosts are legally protected and it is important that anyone working in these areas, including pest technicians, should be aware of what signs to look out for as indicators of bats roosting in a building.

Are bats present?

Ask the property owner about any history of bat presence. Have they seen droppings or bats in the loft? Have they ever rescued a bat nearby? Do they see bats emerging from the roof or landing on walls? During summer months (May-September) they should be able to see bats more frequently on a warm evening. Further guidance about this can be found in our leaflet *Living with bats*.

It may also be practical to undertake some initial investigations yourself to look for signs of a bat roost. You must take great care when seeking to identify a bat roost, firstly because of the safety issues of accessing lofts and other high spaces, and also because it is important not to disturb the bats when in their roost. When they are hibernating, if you do wake bats they will use up valuable energy stores, and through the maternity season, you can disturb bats with their babies.



Bat droppings are usually dry and crumble easily between your fingers to a powder.

Rodent droppings do not crumble. They quickly become hard.

You may see droppings on or around the property (e.g. on window sills/walls), particularly around possible bat access points. A bat dropping looks very similar to a rodent dropping, but it will usually be very dry, and crumble to dust under very little pressure. If you notice any droppings, a quick crumble test (with gloves or a tissue) is a good way to get an indication of bat presence. You could also check the loft for droppings, but be wary of the presence of any bats and stop immediately if you suspect any are there.

Where do bats roost in buildings?

Different species of bat prefer different places; many squeeze into tiny spaces, cracks and crevices. Only occasionally do they hang free or are easily visible.

Outside they may roost:

- under weather boarding or hanging tiles
- above soffits and behind fascia and barge boarding
- between window frame and wall brickwork
- in gaps behind cladding tiles or wood
- between underfelt and boards or tiles
- inside cavity walls

Inside roof spaces they may roost:

- along the ridge beam
- around the gable end
- around the chimney breast
- in cracks and crevices in brick / stone work and timbers

When do bats use buildings?

- Bats are most often noticed in houses between April and September. However they can roost in buildings at any time of year.
- Female bats usually have only one baby each year, suckling it for several weeks. The mothers gather in maternity roosts to have their babies in summer, and this is the time they are most likely to be seen using buildings.
- The bats move away when the young can fly and feed themselves and have usually left by September/October.
- Immature individuals, adult males and non-breeding females will occupy a variety of roosts, individually or in small groups, at any time of year.
- Disturbance or the use of chemicals at maternity roosts in houses can have a major impact on bat populations in the wider area.
- Bats do roost in houses in winter, usually in smaller numbers, but are difficult to see.
- Some species of bat e.g. brown long-eared bats can remain in properties all year round.

For more information about when and where you may encounter bats roosting in buildings, please see our leaflet *Bats & Buildings*.

Pest control in a bat roost

The law (see summary on page 3) does not prevent the control of pests such as wasps, bees, hornets, cluster flies and rodents from occurring within a property where a bat roost is present, however such works may unintentionally affect bats or their roosts, so advice must be sought when controlling pests in an area where bats are, or are known to have been, present.

To avoid an offence from being committed, if bats or their droppings are discovered at any stage before or after operations have started, work must not continue and advice should be taken from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) (see page 3 for contact details).

Common Pests

Below is an overview for information. However please note that advice should be sought from your SNCO before any action is taken in order to keep within the law.

Cluster flies

In the first instance please refer to our attached leaflet *Cluster flies* for guidance on non-chemical methods of treatment. If bats are present, it may be possible to alleviate the fly problem by blocking the routes that the flies enter the living areas of the house. Alternatively, vacuum cleaners can be used to collect the flies. Bat-friendly fly-traps include an enclosed box containing granules which attracts the flies into it and dispatches them.

Spray treatment is not recommended in bat roosts but can be undertaken (using SNCO approved chemicals) where it can be confirmed by a bat worker/roost visitor that no bats are present. Spraying should always be a last resort, used only after all non-chemical methods have been considered and deemed unsuitable in that particular situation, If electric fly killers are to be used, advice should be sought from the SNCO beforehand since their operational hours must be monitored and tailored according to the time of year. Any servicing required at intervals must also be agreed with the SNCO. **Sticky traps should never be used in the vicinity of a bat roost.**

Rodents

Always do the crumble test to check droppings are identified correctly.

Spring, cage or sticky traps should not be used in/near bat roosts as there is a risk that bats, particularly babies, may accidentally fall onto them and become injured. Similarly open trays of bait should not be used; although bats are not attracted to them, there is a possibility that they could fall into one or come into contact with rodenticide and accumulate poison on their fur, which they could ingest upon grooming. Ultrasonic devices should never be used in the vicinity of a bat roost as it is uncertain as to how they may affect bats and could potentially disturb them.

Only bait packs or enclosed forms of bait should be used in bat roosts. The attached **Rodent Control** advice sheet with appropriate timings and methods can be followed without the need for a visit, provided that no access points are being blocked. If access blocking is to occur, it must first be confirmed by a bat worker/roost visitor that these are not also being used by bats.

Wasp nests

In some circumstances, e.g. where wasps are a health and safety issue, insecticides suitable for use in bat roosts can be used, but advice must be obtained from the appropriate SNCO about when to apply them, particularly if bats and wasps share a common access point or the nest is close to the area used by the bats. Usually a survey by a bat worker/roost visitor would be required to determine the case specific advice.

Wood-boring insects

Treatment of wood (using approved products by the SNCO) may take place if it can be confirmed that bats are not present in their roost when the treatment goes ahead. Typically these products have minimal amounts of pesticide and contain a synthetic pyrethroid or boron compound. Since recommendations change regularly, details of insecticides and fungicides can be obtained from SNCOs (e.g. www.gov.uk/guidance/bat-roosts-use-of-chemical-pest-control-products-and-timber-treatments-in-or-near-them). Full advice should however be provided on a case specific basis following a survey by a bat worker/roost visitor.

Summary of the law relating to bats

As population numbers have fallen, all bats and their roosts are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Under these pieces of legislation it is illegal to:

- deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat;
- intentionally, recklessly or deliberately disturb a bat. In relation to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) the offence applies whilst the species is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) it applies anywhere;
- **damage or destroy** the breeding or resting place (roost) of a bat;
- possess a bat (alive or dead), or any part of a bat;
- **intentionally or recklessly obstruct access** to a bat roost;
- sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats (alive or dead), or parts of bats.

Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used by bats for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts year after year, **the roost is protected whether or not bats are present**. In this context 'damage' could include treatment with chemicals found in wood preservatives.

Your Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO)

If you need to undertake any works that may affect your roost, it is recommended that you take the necessary precautions by seeking advice on how to do works lawfully. This advice can be provided by the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) for your country:

England:	Natural England (via BCT)	0345 1300 228
Northern Ireland:	Northern Ireland Environment Agency	028 9039 5264
Scotland:	Scottish Natural Heritage	01463 725 165 / batsinhouses@snh.gov.uk
Wales:	Natural Resources Wales	0300 065 3000 (ask for the species team)

Please note that not all building types / pest control work may be covered by the SNCO service for a free bat worker/roost visitor survey so it may be necessary to engage an ecological consultant.



Cluster flies

This leaflet is designed for those who need to carry out cluster fly pest control in dwellings where bats roost, or are suspected to roost. It is specific to these works only and to no other works. If you require further information after reading this leaflet, please contact the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT).

Do I have bats?

Where a bat roost is suspected, it may be practical to undertake some initial investigations. You must take great care when seeking to identify a bat roost, firstly because of the safety issues of accessing lofts and other high spaces, and also because it is important not to disturb the bats when in their roost. When they are hibernating, if you do wake bats they will use up valuable energy stores, and through the maternity season, you can disturb bats with their babies.



Bat droppings are usually dry and crumble easily between your fingers to a powder.

Rodent droppings do not crumble. They quickly become hard.

You may see droppings on or around the property, particularly around possible bat access points. A bat dropping looks very similar to a rodent dropping, but will usually be very dry, and crumble to dust under very little pressure. If you notice any droppings, a quick crumble test (with gloves or a tissue) is a good way to get an indication of bat presence. You could also check the loft, but do be wary of the presence of any bats and stop immediately if you suspect any are there.

Another way to identify bats is to perform what we call emergence and/or re-entry surveys. During summer months (May-September) you should be able to see bats more frequently. You will find some tips on carrying out these surveys in our leaflet *Living with bats*.

Cluster flies in loft spaces

Cluster flies usually arrive at properties in late autumn. They gather on wall surfaces, and then move into cool loft areas for winter hibernation. Unlike other flies, they are not interested in searching for food during this time and so are not in any way attracted by the presence of bats or bat droppings. Their presence in lofts is therefore unrelated to the bats. If left alone, cluster flies lay dormant in the loft and then either die off in large numbers over the winter period or move out in the early spring. However once cluster flies have established the use of a building as a hibernation site, subsequent generations may return every year. The building is attractive to them either because of its location or colour. It is also suspected that the smell of pheromones may be left by previous infestations.

Cluster flies tend to become a nuisance to householders if they enter living areas, either on their natural route to the loft during autumn or when they disperse in spring, or as a result of being woken up during their hibernation period by disturbance (e.g. from light, vibrations etc.) within the roof space. However they do not present a health risk to householders.

Cluster fly infestations tend to be an annually recurring problem and although chemical treatment may solve the fly problem in the short term, it will not necessarily alleviate this. **Therefore, in the first instance we would recommend tackling the problem of the flies using non-chemical treatment.**

What can I do initially, without using chemicals within the loft void?

The most effective non-chemical treatment is to minimise the number of places where the flies can get in. As the flies generally land on the walls and run upwards into the roof; you may also wish to block the routes flies use to get from the roof into the living area.

- Place a fine mesh over ventilation slots in the soffits, **making sure that you avoid any access points used by bats.**
- Seal up any gaps around window frames, gaps around the loft hatch, pipes or beside beams and light-fittings.

Please note that bats may access gaps as small as 8mm by 20mm. **If you are unsure if blocking gaps would affect bat accesses, please do not undertake this work without seeking further advice from your SNCO or an ecological consultant.**

Within the living rooms:

- Use a traditional fly spray or fly paper. **Do not use these within the loft or anywhere that bats may come into contact with them.**
- Use a trap which can be fixed to the inside of a window. These are commercially available and consist of an enclosed box of granules, which attracts the flies into it and dispatches them. (Please see appendix).

Within the loft:

- Take care to minimise disturbance to bats when entering the loft, particularly during the critical hibernation period (November to February) and breeding season (May to September).
- Collect the flies carefully with a vacuum cleaner*, but first please ensure there is no chance a bat may get sucked up and injured.
- **Time vacuuming for between March and April, or late September to October, when any baby bats will have been weaned, and the bats will not have entered hibernation yet.**
- Place the vacuum cleaner bag in a deep freeze for several days to kill the flies.
- Take care not to inhale any loft insulation fibres.

**Please note this is not ideal where loft insulation is old & will quickly clog a vacuum cleaner.*

The flies do leave buildings in the spring so we would suggest that any necessary entering of the loft during the winter is kept to a minimum so not to warm them up by the lighting or by your presence.

Can I chemically treat the flies where there is a bat roost?

Since many bat species are so rare, the laws protecting them are strict (see 'Summary of law relating to bats' below) and chemicals used in the vicinity of bats and their roosting sites can be harmful to any bats present and detrimental to the roost.

If there is a bat roost at your property it will be necessary to organise the timings of any chemical treatment to fit in with the life-cycle of the bats, i.e. avoiding times when bats are present, as well as using precautionary methods and chemicals which have been approved as safe for use in the vicinity of a bat roost.

If you should choose to use a chemical solution to treat the cluster flies please seek advice from your local SNCO or an ecological consultant prior to undertaking any work so that the correct advice can be given on how to proceed in the most efficient way possible within the constraints of the law.

Sometimes bats remain within roof structures, cavity walls and other inaccessible crevices and in some cases it may not be possible to confirm that bats have vacated the roost for alternative hibernation locations. In these instances chemical treatment will not be possible since there is a high risk that chemical fumes could affect the bats. Non-chemical options would therefore be advised.

Longer term cluster fly solutions

Possible long-term solutions to help prevent future generations of flies from returning include changing the colour or reflectance of the building, and/or the use of a disinfectant solution around windows, eaves and soffits (to remove any pheromones which may be left by a previous cluster fly infestation). Please contact your SNCO should you wish to consider any of these options.

Electric fly killers should not be used without seeking advice from your SNCO beforehand since their operational hours must be monitored and tailored according to the time of year. Any servicing required at intervals must also be agreed with the SNCO.

Summary of the law relating to bats

As population numbers have fallen, all bats and their roosts are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). Bats use roosts on a seasonal basis and therefore bat roosts are protected whether the bats are in occupation or not.

Under these pieces of legislation it is illegal to:

- deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat;
- intentionally, recklessly or deliberately disturb a bat (in relation to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) the offence applies whilst the species is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) it applies anywhere);
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The Bat Conservation Trust (known as BCT) is a registered charity in England and Wales (1012361) and in Scotland (SC040116).

Registered office: Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD
Email: enquiries@bats.org.uk National Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228

Appendix: Cluster buster



- **Non-toxic (no chemical) lure for flies**
- **Environmentally friendly**
- **Long lasting and economical**

Cluster buster fly control trap for use on windows. These traps can assist with capturing cluster flies and are available from a number of outlets.



Rodent Control

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Rodent Control

Where a roost is present or suspected and rodents are also present, it is advisable to lay rodent bait when bats are not present, if at all possible. Care should be taken to minimise any disturbance caused to the bats, particularly during the critical hibernation period (November to February) and breeding season (May to September). Ideally work should be timed for **between March and April, or September/October**, when any baby bats will have been weaned, and the bats will not have entered hibernation yet.

- Provide a copy of this leaflet to the pest control operative for them to follow. Inform them of the presence of a roost and that there is always the possibility of bats being present in loft spaces any time of year.
- Working in line with the CRRU code of practice and following product label directions;
 - Use bait bags or enclosed forms of bait (e.g. wax blocks in bait stations) only.
 - Distribute the appropriate number of bait bags/bait stations throughout the roof void at floor level only.*
- Take care not to disturb any bats when laying fresh bait or when removing old/unused bait and dead rodents. Access the loft only when necessary and allow any bats access to an undisturbed area at all times.

- Keep noise to a minimum and avoid shining lights at ridge level where bats are most likely to be.
- Take care underfoot as bats can be found at any level of the roof space (including ceiling joists) where they are in danger of being stepped on.

** Before embarking on a baiting programme, the pest controller should read the product label carefully and follow the instructions given to ensure that the correct, legal and safe procedure for that specific product is followed.*

Please **do not** use;

- Open trays of rodenticide or loose bait. If bats should come into contact with the poison there is a risk they could ingest it.
- Spring, cage or sticky traps as these can kill and injure bats.
- Ultrasonic deterrent devices anywhere near to a bat roost. Little is known as to their effect on bats and the use of them may be classified as disturbance.

Sealing gaps to prevent entry by rodents

You may also wish to minimise the number of places where rodents can get in. This might involve blocking up holes at ground level, for example, around pipes and ventilation bricks. If the hole has a ventilation purpose, please seek appropriate advice before starting any work. Sometimes a fine metal mesh can be used to retain adequate ventilation whilst preventing rodent access.

Please note however that bat access points from the roost to the exterior of your property or gaps used by bats to access from one loft space to another must be left clear (see Bats & the Law section below). If you are at all unsure whether blocking a hole could affect the bats at all, please contact your Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) or an ecological consultant before taking any action.

Bats & the Law

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