



PEST CONTROL POLICY

Version 1

Adopted August 2023

1. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- (a) There will be “pests” of different kinds present on the allotments that have to be actively managed using control measures as set out in this document.
- (b) Health and safety of allotment holders, children, pets, visitors, and livestock on the allotments must be safeguarded against harm from the control measures used.
- (c) Control measures must NOT be deployed outside of a plot holders’ assigned plot under any circumstances.
- (d) On occasions where the allotment association or a contracted pest control officer place a control measure on a communal area, this will be made apparent to all plot holders and the control measure should not be interfered with in any way.
- (e) Control measures may be stored on plots but MUST be kept in their original packaging and care should be taken to keep them out of the reach of children and pets.
- (f) The use of glue traps (except fly paper) and snares of any kind including free-running on site is strictly forbidden as is any trap that causes the animal to drown (except those designed for invertebrates)
- (g) The use of rat or mouse poison is not permitted on site due to the risk of the secondary poisoning of predators

2. SPECIFIC PESTS

(a) Rats and mice

Whilst the council have a statutory duty to control rats, they do not have a statutory duty to control mice but the control measures for both are the same.

Significance: Rats in particular are a major spreader of disease which has serious health and safety implications when they are present around food products like on an allotment. They can also be destructive and can cause harm to livestock. Mice are fond of young plant shoots and seeds.

Control measures: Mechanical mousetraps and rat traps can be baited and deployed at all times of the year but must be positioned in a way so as not to trap other species. No traps that will cause the animal to drown are to be used nor are animals to be drowned once contained in a ‘humane’ trap.

Poison is not to be used by plot holders under any circumstances due to the risk of the bait being consumed by a non-target animal or baited animals being predated on. If there is a significant problem with rats and

mice that trapping does not solve, the association committee will engage a pest controller to assess the problem and apply an appropriate control measure.

Hygiene/management: Prevention of a rat or mouse infestation is much easier than cure. If you have a foodstuff accessible to rats or mice they may try to eat it at any time of year. Rats in particular can cause major infestations between late autumn, over winter to spring. For this reason we advise plot holders who see any evidence of rodent activity to use a control measure immediately: Simple things such as not having decking, placing your shed on a hard foundation or raised up on blocks will limit the areas rodents can inhabit. Those keeping livestock onsite need to take precautions that feed is not left out in runs overnight and is stored in rodent proof containers.

(b) Slugs and Snails.

Significance: Slugs and snails are widespread on the allotment site. And as well as causing significant damage to plants can also carry lung worm which is particularly dangerous to dogs.

Control: Copper tape around beds, coffee grounds, grit, broken shells, trap cups they drop into, and slug/snail pellets are acceptable controls. Certain sacrificial plants can be used such as Hostas to gather slugs and snail to one place to be collected. Remember when using pellets that slugs and snails are food for amphibians, hedgehogs and even chickens, if possible try to avoid using them.

Hygiene/management: Slugs and snails like living in crevices and damp spots. Piles of leaf mould or other rotting vegetation may also harbour slugs and snails so avoiding having them should help avoid a problem developing.

(c) Wasps:

Significance: Whilst not harmful to the environment, wasps' stings are unpleasant and on an allotment there are a multitude of places they may choose to nest that aren't problematic initially but that become problematic as time progresses. It should also be noted that all wasps become aggressive scavengers in autumn as a natural part of their nest's lifecycle. At this time they particularly seek out sweet, sugary substances which on an allotment site will result in them causing significant damage to soft fruit like plums and plot holders at increased risk of being stung when picking soft fruit.

Control: It is up to individual plot holders what they do with wasps nests: if the nest is away from the border of their plot and not causing a nuisance then it may be left in situ to complete its life cycle.

Wasp nests start out very small and are easily removed before adult, worker wasps emerge.

In order to remove or destroy a wasps nest, commercially available nest killer may be used by a plot holder on their plot. On communal areas, the association committee will determine if a nest poses a threat/risk and act accordingly.

Hygiene/management: Wasps nests are relatively easily prevented: they are begun by a single queen in spring and become more and more noticeable as the nest grows. If spotted early, the nest can be destroyed before adult wasps emerge. Wasps' favourite places to build include sheds and compost heaps so keeping an eye on these from spring onwards should give early warning of whether a wasp nest is developing

(d) Houseflies

Significance: Houseflies can transmit intestinal worms, or their eggs and are potential vectors of disease such as dysentery, gastro-enteritis, typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis. They will frequent and feed indiscriminately on any liquefiable solid food, putrefying material or food stored for human consumption. They can also cause harm to livestock with incidence of 'flystrike'

Control: Flies have rapid, prolific breeding habits and high mobility. In order to break the life-cycle, control measures should be directed against larval and adult flies. Fly traps such as those that attract flies into a liquid or fly paper stipes can be effective. Keep a check on livestock and treat any open wounds or dirty bottoms.

Hygiene/management: Satisfactory hygiene is necessary to limit potential breeding sites and food sources. Entry of flies into buildings can be prevented by 1.12mm mesh fly screen or bead screens. Those with livestock onsite can conduct regular poo picks.

(e) Ants

Significance: Foraging worker ants cause a nuisance as they travel widely in search of food, following well-defined trails and clustering around the food source. Sweet foods are preferred. They are obviously an unpleasant sight and may damage food for human consumption but ants can also feed on some allotment pests so living in harmony with them is preferable.

Hygiene/management Although frequently inaccessible and difficult to destroy, ants' nests must be eradicated. If infestation is to be successfully controlled, hormone treatment is required which sterilises the female ant.

2. Other Wild Animals on Site

All the animals in this section may be present onsite but are not deemed as 'pests', therefore preventative measures can be taken. Anyone found to be attempting to or are causing deliberate harm to the animals listed below will be reported to the RSPCA

Bats: Bats are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994. The penalties for contravention are severe. If bats are discovered in any building or on the allotment site they must not under any circumstances be killed, expelled, stopped from gaining access, touched or disturbed. Contractors must be prevented from doing work anywhere near them. English Nature should be contacted for advice. If you are bitten or scratched by a bat please get medical help immediately as there is a risk of rabies in the UK. If you find an injured or grounded bat please call the National Bat Help Line on **0345 1300228**

Birds: Birds can become a nuisance as they enjoy taking the tops off young plants and eating seed and fruit. The best controlled measure is using fruit cages or netting over beds to prevent access. Quiet scarers can also be used but nothing that will cause a nuisance to the residents of the nearby houses. Birds can also spread bird flu to poultry, so ensure that you follow the latest government guidelines.

Foxes: Foxes may occasionally spread disease such as toxocara and leptospirosis but the risk is believed to be small. More significantly foxes cause nuisance in a number of ways such as depositing of faeces, digging up plants and attacking livestock. Anyone keeping livestock onsite must ensure they have taken precautions when constructing their enclosure to prevent fox attack. Shutting livestock up at night in a secure housing either manually or via an automatic door is a must.

Badgers: Badgers are large powerful animals that have the ability to break into poorly constructed livestock housing. As with foxes precautions must be taken to ensure any hutches, coops and runs are sturdy. They can also cause damage by digging up plants. The best way to deter them is to fence your plot/beds but remember they are very good diggers so you may have to refill in holes.

Deer/Wild Rabbits: Muntjac deer and rabbits do come onto the allotment site and will eat plants. Placing mesh fencing around your plot will help prevent access but remember rabbits will dig. Netting over beds as well as high pitch scarers may also work. Wild Rabbits can also spread myxomatosis so it is advisable to get any rabbits kept onsite vaccinated.

Reptiles: Although not yet observed there are a number of reptiles that will inhabit allotment sites such as Slow worms and Grass Snakes, both of these are attracted to compost bins and heaps as a place to hibernate and give birth or lay their eggs. Both are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Neither are venomous and should be left alone if not in danger or injured. The only venomous snake in the UK is the Adder, which are very unlikely to be onsite as they prefer heathlands, woodlands and coastal areas. Smooth snakes are also not going to be expected onsite.

Identifying Britain's Snakes



Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) Typically found near ponds and rivers, in a variety of habitats. Often in gardens: in or near ponds, in sunny spots or on compost heaps. Widespread in central and southern Britain, rarer in north. Distinctive yellow/white and black markings behind head. Usual length 70–100cm.

Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) Found throughout Britain in a wide variety of habitats. Often in gardens: found under objects such as paving stones, in long grass and compost heaps. A legless lizard, often mistaken for a snake. May have thin stripe down back, and dark sides. Shiny appearance. Tail often blunt. Usual length 35–40cm.

Adder (*Vipera berus*) Found in all regions of Britain but rare in many areas. Prefers heathlands, commons, open woodlands, moorland and coastal habitats. Very rare in gardens. Distinctive zig-zag markings from head to tail. Male (head left) greyish with black markings; female (above) pale brown with dark brown markings. Usual length 40–70cm.

Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) Very rare: mainly limited to heathland nature reserves in Dorset, Hampshire and Surrey. Secretive and rarely seen basking. General colour grey-brown. Dark brown marking on top of head, and bars or paired blotches along back. Usual length 45–55cm.

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www.arc-trust.org
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- All native snakes and lizards are legally protected.
- Escaped pet snakes (various colours) are found in urban areas.
- Descriptions and sizes above are typical but individuals vary.

Photographs – Heads: Fred Holmes. Grass snake: Ben Lintburn. Smooth snake: Jim Foster. All others: Howard Inns.

Find out more in the ARC endorsed book Britain's Reptiles and Amphibians from www.wildguides.co.uk



Amphibians: Including frogs, toads and newts are great pest controllers eating slugs and snails. They can be encouraged with the installation of ponds. They will hibernate over winter in places like compost heaps. The Great Crested Newt and their eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and licences are needed if you are planning to do any works which might disturb them.

Licences are not required if you are:

- Rescuing a Great Crested Newt that would otherwise die without intervention.
- Doing work to a pond during the winter when no great crested newts are likely to be present

Hedgehogs: Like amphibians eat slugs and snails but they are prone to carrying various parasites, so those with livestock on site should keep a check they have not been passed on. They typically hibernate from late December / early January until late March time. However, this is very dependent on the weather and the individual hedgehog, as some will hibernate earlier or later and some not at all. A healthy hibernation weight is 600g by December, if you see an underweight, sick or injured hedgehog please contact the Animal House Vets in Rugby as advised by the Warwickshire Hedgehog Rescue on **01788 575300**. Hedgehogs are attracted to long grass leaf/log piles, so take care when gardening and strimming particularly during the winter so as not to disturb them.

3. Cats on Site

There are a number of cats who are actively encouraged to come onto the site as rodent prevention. That said they can cause a nuisance when they use your beds as toilets. Cats like soft freshly dug soil as it is easy for them to dig in. As with birds the best way to prevent them from doing this is to prevent them access, cover unused area with membrane and net off unestablished planting before it provides enough ground cover. Quiet cat scarers can be used such as those that emit a high-pitched whistle, though the success of

these is debatable. Another option is to provide a designated cat toilet which will encourage them to use that not your beds.

4. Sick or injured animals

Should you find an injured or sick animal onsite please contact the committee and if possible and safe to do so, take it to the nearest vets, which is Vets4Pets in Pets at Home at the Junction One shopping park. If the animal is a plot holder's livestock, if possible contact the plot holder in question or contact the committee so we can get in touch with them.

Appendix – Useful links

<https://www.ukwildlife.com/index.php/wildlife-countryside-act-1981/> - Details animals covered by the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and what protections they have on them.

<https://warwickshirehedgehogrescue.org/> - Warwickshire Hedgehog Rescue

<https://www.warksbats.co.uk/aboutus/home.aspx> - Warwickshire Bat Group

<https://www.groups.arguk.org/wart> - Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team

<https://www.sttiggywinkles.org.uk/hedgehog-fact-sheet/> - Hedgehog