

Natural England summary of self-reported shooting events during the 2015 badger control licences – ‘wounded and lost’



Any disease control programme where the aim is to reduce the population size of a wildlife vector through the use of firearms carries an element of risk with regard to the wounding of individual animals. The contractor has control over the condition of his firearm, the ammunition used, the zeroing of the rifle and his shooting technique. Once the trigger is released, external parameters outside of the contractor's control come into play. Wounding can result for a number of reasons with movement of the target species simultaneously with trigger release being the most common. The reaction of an animal to being shot with expanding ammunition can vary widely and sometimes it can appear that it has been wounded and lost. The age of the animal, its weight, its state of alertness, and whether it is aware of human presence can all influence reaction to shot. So even where an animal experiences maximum trauma to vital organs from expanding ammunition, it can run a significant distance before succumbing to irreversible unconsciousness.

During the 2015 badger control licences, one event of ‘wounded and lost’ was self-reported by a contractor from West Gloucestershire. This event was followed up by a Natural England monitor, which involved questioning of the contractor and a visit to the site in question.

To ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding this event, the monitor gathered evidence on the following:

- **Background info** e.g. firearm/ammo combination, shooting position, sighting device equipment used, rifle zero distance
- **Details of event** e.g. distance of badger from contractor, badger activity immediately prior to shot, angle of badger to contractor, point of aim, audible bullet strike, badger reaction to shot, gait of badger following shot
- **Follow-up action** e.g. was strike site found, evidence at strike site (blood, hair, bone), blood trail, location of cover, location of nearest sett, use of tracking dog

West Gloucestershire – 09/09/2015

- .223 ballistic tip 55 grain / night vision / 70m zero
- Badger standing broadside at 50m from contractor
- Unknown distance to nearest sett but >100m
- Badger moved simultaneously with trigger release
- Audible bullet strike – distinct ‘thwack’
- Badger ran to the left, spun once in a complete circle and then ran to the right into the adjoining wood
- Small amount of blood and bone found at strike site
- No visible blood trail
- Protestor activity prevented further searching that night
- Returned next day with tracking dog but no success.