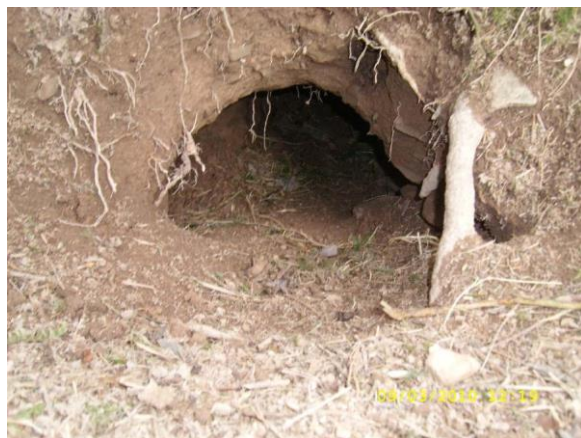


# Badger field signs

## Badger setts (burrows)

Badgers live in burrow systems called setts. Typically each social group of badgers will have one main sett and several smaller outlier setts in their territory. Setts are commonly found on well drained slopes, in woodland edges or hedgerows. Setts vary in their appearance, but typically can be identified by:

- D shaped hole, wider than it is tall
- Large spoil heaps with a furrow
- Clear runs (paths) between sett entrances



Active



Inactive



Active



Inactive



## Field signs which indicate a sett is active

- Entrances smooth and cleared of sticks/debris
- Fresh digging or spoil
- Bedding (grass or hay dragged into holes)
- Fresh Prints

Inactive setts are typically blocked with leaves, sticks or soil.

## Badger latrines

Badgers deposit their faeces in small pits or holes in the ground called latrines. Generally a latrine will consist of several pits, although in some cases there may only be one or two. Latrines are used as territorial markers at boundaries between social groups and are typically found next to fences, hedges or prominent features like trees or pylons <sup>[1]</sup>. Badger faeces often contains indicators of their diet such as partly digested wheat or maize.



Worms



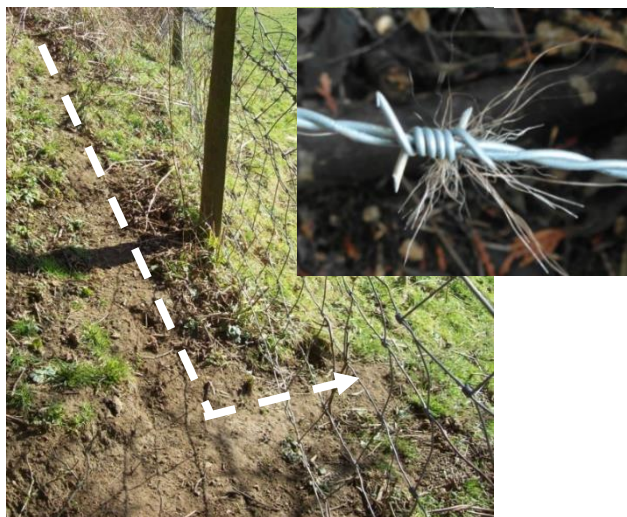
Maize



## Badger runs and prints

Badgers are creatures of habit and will regularly use the same paths producing runs which are often visible in long grass, or at points where they cross fences or hedges. You can often see clumps of badger hair (grey with a black tip) where a run passes under barbed wire fencing.

Prints typically have a 'Kidney' shaped pad with five toes in a line above, in some cases only the four largest toes are visible.



## Can you identify infected setts from field signs?

**It is not possible to work out if a sett is infected from field signs**, such as the presence or location of faeces. Identifying TB infection requires the testing of live or dead badgers, or the analysis of badger faeces in the laboratory [2].

## How can you work out the number of badgers in the sett?

Larger setts will typically contain more badgers than small setts, but there is **no simple way of working out the number of resident badgers from field signs** such as the number of holes [3]. One or two animals can potentially produce lots of field signs, and small compact setts may contain large numbers of badgers. The number of resident badgers can be estimated from trapping, or the genetic analysis of badger hair [4].

## Where can I find out more information?

More information on bovine TB and a range of related topics can be found on [www.tbhub.co.uk](http://www.tbhub.co.uk). This sheet was produced as part of a Knowledge Exchange project funded by NERC. For more info email [a.robertson@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.robertson@exeter.ac.uk) or visit [www.tbknowledgeexchange.co.uk](http://www.tbknowledgeexchange.co.uk)

## Studies referenced

1. Delahay et al. (2007) Distribution of badger latrines in a high-density population: habitat selection and implications for the transmission of bovine tuberculosis to cattle. *Journal of Zoology*
2. King et al. (2015) Performance of a Noninvasive Test for Detecting *Mycobacterium bovis* Shedding in European Badger (*Meles meles*) Populations. *Journal of clinical microbiology*
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