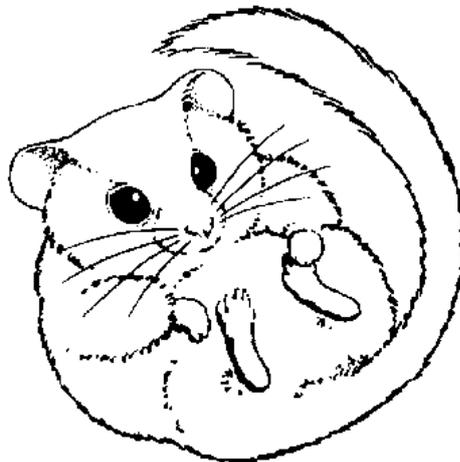




National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP)

Survey guidelines and recording forms 2014



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Thank you very much for participating in the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP) and good luck with this season's nest box checks. Happy dormousing!

For detailed information on dormouse ecology and conservation see *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook*

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/80018?category=32020>

Don't forget that you need a licence to handle dormice. They may be granted by Natural England (NE)

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/licences/applicationforms.aspx>

or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) <http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/apply-buy-report/apply-buy-grid/protected-species-licensing/european-protected-species-licensing/?lang=en>

A *Dormouse Training Log* has been developed by PTES which is supported by NE and NRW. This gives an indication of what is needed for people to obtain a licence. It can be downloaded from the PTES website - www.ptes.org/dormousetraining

The PTES website also contains other useful training resources for both new dormouse trainees and existing licence holders, with videos and presentations on the box checking process, including how to age and sex dormice.

1) Setting up a dormouse monitoring site

50 or more nest boxes should be put up at a site, spaced about 10-20m apart in parallel lines, 10-20m apart. This can either be in one large grid system or in smaller grids throughout the wood.

The nest boxes should be sited in hazel trees where possible, or other shrubs or young trees which are well linked to the adjacent understorey and canopy.

The most convenient height for the nest boxes is about 1.2 to 1.5m off the ground, about chest height. Tie the nest box to the tree or shrub with plastic covered wire or thick elastic cord, so that it can be lifted down easily.

Number the boxes sequentially with waterproof ink – it's useful to mark the number on several sides and the lid. Make a map showing the location of each numbered box - it can be helpful to note what tree type the box is on, or nearby features.

See pages 25 to 30 of *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook* for full details.

Contact PTES so that we can register the site and give you a login for online data entry. We also record details of the woodland type, ownership and management and require a map of the area monitored by your nest boxes. Please contact PTES for the relevant forms and map if you have not already sent us this information.

2) Preparing for your box checks

Box checks should be carried out between the 15th and 25th of the month.

As a minimum two box checks should be carried out during the year, once in either May or June (pre-breeding) and again in either September or October (post-breeding). If you are able to carry out more visits nest boxes can be checked once a month between the months of April to November inclusive.

Carry out the checks in the morning if possible, in order not to miss torpid dormice - they tend to warm up about midday.

For each check you will need at least two large clear polythene bags in which you can open nest boxes containing dormice, a supply of small clear polythene bags for weighing animals, scales (weighing in grams up to 50g) and a bung to block the box holes.

You will also need sufficient copies of the recording forms, a clipboard, pens/pencils and maps of your site and box locations.

You may also wish to take out equipment for repairing boxes as you go along such as: paint scraper, bungee cord/wire, hammer, wood staples/screws, screwdriver, wire cutters, permanent marker.

3) The survey forms

There are three types of form we would like completed: the nest box checks summary form, the dormouse record form and the recording form for species other than dormice.

NEST BOX CHECKS SUMMARY FORM

This summarises all the checks you make to a nest box site in one year. Please complete a line even if you find no dormice on a visit.

For each visit record:

- Date of check
- Start and end time
- Total number of boxes checked
- Total number of dormice seen (including young, escaped or dead animals)
- Total number of dormouse nests found in boxes which do not also contain a dormouse

DORMOUSE RECORD FORM

This is for individual details of each dormouse seen or dormouse nests with no dormouse present. Please start a new sheet for each date. You only need to create a record for boxes which contain dormice or dormouse nests.

Please record;

- the box number and the time it was opened
- the total number of dormice in the box or whether there was just a dormouse nest

Then for each individual dormouse record:

- Sex (this may be very difficult for juveniles less than about 7g):
Male (**M**), female (**F**) or unknown (**U**)
- Weight to the nearest 0.5g
- Whether torpid (**T**), active (**A**) or dead (**D**)
- Breeding condition:
 - TS** - male with testes scrotal
 - P** - pregnant female
 - L** - lactating female
 - PL** - female post lactation, sometimes without young
 - NB** - non-breeding
 - U** - unknown (please only use if you cannot provide a best guess)

- Age class:
 - Adult** - an animal that has survived at least one winter. Fur orange-brown
 - Pink** - new born with no sign of fur (approx. weight 1g-2.5g)
 - GEC** - grey fur and eyes still closed (approx. weight 2.5g-6g)
 - EO** - eyes open, grey/brown fur, not weaned (approx. weight 6g-10g)
 - Juv** - independent juvenile ie young of the year, appearance similar to adult but fur more grey/brown (approx. weight 10g upwards)
 - U** - unknown (please use only if you cannot provide a best guess)

- Comments:
 - Record anything of interest here, such as truncated tails, white tipped tails, if the dormouse escaped, if there was no nest in the box etc.

A note on recording litters:

Recording data on litter sizes and weights of young is important as this information can provide a good indication of breeding success and therefore how dormice are faring.

Females with young should be disturbed as little as possible but it is very useful if you can at least record the age class and the minimum number present e.g. Adult and 2+ pinks. If you are unable to count the young please record as 1 individual (as well as any adults present).

If it is inappropriate to proceed further leave the nest box undisturbed - otherwise we suggest the following guidelines;

Pink or grey with eyes closed (GEC):

- Count the young leaving them in the nest as long as possible
- Quickly weigh 1-3 of the young together and calculate the average weight (make a note on the recording form that you have taken an average)
- If the female is reluctant to come out do not disturb her further and just record on the form that there was an adult present
- Return the young as quickly as possible.

Eyes open (EO):

- To get an accurate count you will probably need to take them all out of the box.
- Weigh the young together or in two or three batches and take an average weight (make a note on the recording form that you have taken an average).

RECORDING FORM FOR SPECIES OTHER THAN DORMICE

We would also be interested to hear about other mammal species you find using the nest boxes.

As a minimum you only need to record the box number, species and the number of animals per box, but if you can weigh and sex them that data would be very useful too.

4) Best practice guidelines in the field

Please take a look at the dormouse training resources section on the PTES website which has useful guidance videos and presentations for both new trainees and existing licence holders. This will help to refresh your memory of the box checking process and includes information on how to age and sex animals.

To ensure minimal disturbance to dormice please:

- make sure everyone is as quiet as possible throughout the check to minimise the chances of dormice escaping – try not to call out to other members of the team
- when putting the bung in the nest box hole make sure you can see it, rather than feel for it, to ensure no dormice are trying to get out and get trapped
- ensure the bung is in place before opening the box lid
- you may like to use clear Perspex squares to slide over the top of the open nest box to get a better look
- if you need to take the nest box off the tree for a full check make sure it is resting on a flat piece of ground and in a large clear plastic bag first
- carry out the check as close to the tree that the box was on so that if any animals escape they will hopefully climb into a tree they are familiar with
- if the nest box has a removable rather than hinged lid check the underside and if it's clear then take it right out of the bag before checking the nest
- if the nest box has a hinged lid hold it open through the plastic bag to make sure it doesn't suddenly drop down, potentially injuring dormice
- remove the bung from the box and bag to prevent the dormice hiding inside it
- roll your sleeves up – dormice find it easier to run up material than bare skin and they also like running up inside them!
- try not to ruin the structure of the nest whilst checking for animals – gently feel for the central nesting chamber and then around the edge of the nest in all the corners. If it feels empty it is okay to carefully take the whole nest out to check underneath
- if a dormouse jumps out of the box on the ground make sure everyone stands still whilst the most experienced person tries to catch it. If it isn't caught quite quickly put the box back and move away carefully
- take particular care not to handle dormice by the tail, as the skin is easily stripped off and does not regrow. Do not scruff dormice either

- before putting the animals back in the nest box make sure there is a clear route for them to get back into the central chamber
- when putting animals back in the nest box make sure the lid is on securely and post them gently through the hole at the back, blowing their tail to make them pull it in before putting the bung back in
- when putting mothers and young back in the nest boxes place the young in first then post the mother back through the hole at the back
- and don't forget at the end of the box check count the bungs back in to ensure none have been left in the back of any nest boxes!

Nest box hygiene;

- clear boxes of all material over the winter months of December, January or February unless dormice are present
- during the rest of the year remove all damp, smelly, infested or rotting nesting material (unless a dormouse is present) and any dead animals discovered (this may include wood mouse or other nests). This prevents dormice getting mites or parasites and will prolong the life of the nest boxes. Dilapidated and old boxes should be replaced as dormice may be less inclined to use them
- it is recommended to remove all terrestrial mammal species other than dormice from nest boxes except if young are present. Do not eject or disturb roosting bats
- do not remove birds' nests during the bird breeding season as it is an offense to damage or destroy an active nest
- use separate bags for each monitoring site to reduce the risk of cross site contamination. We recommend using disinfectant hand gel if working between sites and disposing of any bags and bungs if you find a sick animal during a box check

5) Returning records

Please return all records by 1st December 2014. Even if you didn't find any animals during your box checks we would still like to know about the visits you made in the year.

The best way for you to submit your records is via our online recording site at www.ptes.org. Please contact Susan at susan.sharafi@ptes.org for a login if you do not already have one, if you have forgotten your login or are having any problems with the site.

Records can be entered anytime throughout the year - once you have done a check or at the end of the season. If you are unable to submit your records online please send the paper forms to us at the address on the forms.

6) Health and Safety

The aim of this checklist is to help you improve your own personal safety while carrying out dormouse monitoring visits in the field. The activities and hazards are not intended to be completely exhaustive; this assessment of hazards is for guidance only.

Remember that each site is unique and must be assessed individually. The risk assessment template enclosed can help you identify potential hazards at your site. As many NDMP sites are remote you should consider how the emergency services might reach you if there is an accident. Make sure you know the nearest postcode to your site and the OS grid reference, and note the closest hospital with A&E. Remember this information should be available to all, as accidents can happen to anybody.

If in doubt about any aspect of health and safety relating to a site, always seek further advice from People's Trust for Endangered Species before proceeding with the visit. Please remember that as a volunteer you are under no obligation to take part in this scheme. You should not put yourself or any others in danger.

Hazard	Precautions to be taken to remove hazard or reduce risk level (one precaution may tackle several hazards)
Danger of injury through accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential hazards • Wear appropriate footwear for the location/terrain & weather conditions • Avoid well known danger spots. Do not cross railway lines or other potentially hazardous sites e.g. quarries, ravines • Carry a torch & spare batteries if working late afternoon, a compass &, when in remote areas, a change of clothes • Talk to landowners about the location of potentially hazardous animals • Avoid contact with animals & dung
Inclement weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear appropriate clothing for the time of year, and be prepared for weather changes. • Carry waterproof &/or warm clothing. Hazards can increase significantly in heavy rain, strong wind & thunderstorms • Avoid/terminate all outside activity in inclement weather
Uneven ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential hazards • Wear sturdy boots or shoes • Use footpaths where possible • No distracting work should be carried out while walking
Traffic hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High visibility clothing should be worn whenever working in the vicinity of roads and someone else should keep watch for traffic
Lyme's disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When working in grassland areas where deer are present, wear long trousers & long socks. Check exposed skin for ticks. If a tick is found & you contract flu-like symptoms, tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to Lyme's disease

Tetanus & leptospirosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While not common, these diseases can have severe effects, and in rare cases result in death. Clean any cuts etc immediately with clean water & cover adequately • Ensure that your anti-tetanus treatments are up-to-date (normally within last 10 years) • Avoid contact with water, particularly if contaminated with cattle/rat urine. Wash hands thoroughly & always before eating or smoking. If you contract flu-like symptoms, tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to Weil's disease
Alcohol & drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone under the adverse influence of alcohol or drugs is not permitted to take part in any PTES activities. If you are using prescribed drugs, seek medical advice on any side effects that may affect your performance (eg drowsiness)
Lone Working & Personal attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working alone should be avoided. Try to work in a pair. If this is not possible, always notify someone (partner, friend, neighbour) where you are going and when you expect to be back. Agree on a course of action if you have not returned home by the time you stated • Lone workers should be aware of the location of the nearest house or phone so that help can be called if required. In general, anyone working alone, or those working on sites remote from the emergency services, should carry a mobile phone. This should be tested at the start of the visit to detect reception blind spots
Getting lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a map and compass if necessary • Use a mobile phone in an emergency
Risk of drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-swimmers should be accompanied when walking by water • Do not cross rivers unless by bridge • Avoid work when risk of flooding & be aware of tides • Keep at safe distance from bank/cliff/water edge
Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware and avoid touching or climbing over electric fences • Be aware and avoid touching or climbing over barbed-wire fences, please make sure your tetanus vaccine is up to date
Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of low, fallen branches and take care to avoid them • Be aware of hanging branches and trees and avoid the area • Cease activity in high winds and thunderstorms
Box checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of other wildlife that may be using boxes • Be aware that bees, wasps & hornets may use boxes; identify at the start of a box check whether anyone is allergic to stings

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme
NEST BOX CHECKS SUMMARY FORM

2014



Please complete a line of this form for each check you make of your dormouse nest boxes during the season, even if you do not find any dormice.

N.B. *The total number of dormice recorded should be the same as the number entered on your Dormouse Record Form for that date, and should include young, escaped or dead dormice.

Site name: _____ Site no.: _____ Monitor: _____ Email: _____

Sub-section (if relevant):

Date of box check	Start time	End time	No. of boxes checked	Total no. of dormice recorded*	Total no. of dormouse nests found WITHOUT dormice present	Comments

Data should be submitted by 1st December 2014
 Enter online at www.ptes.org or send to Susan Sharafi (susan.sharafi@ptes.org) PTES, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4BG

RISK ASSESSMENT RECORD – with all control measures *IN PLACE*

Remember that each site is unique and should be assessed individually. The table below can help you identify potential hazards at your site and on each monitoring visit. The Risk Assessment Record should be completed and retained by you. As many NDMP sites are remote you should consider how the emergency services might reach you if there is an accident. This information should be available to all, as accidents can happen to anybody.



Activity/workplace assessed:	Assessor:	Assessment date:
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General information Site name: Nearest postcode: Grid ref: Access information:	Assessor contact number	Local A&E
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Hazard	Will affect	Precautions and/or controls already in place to remove hazard or reduce risk level	Risk (with controls)			Additional controls needed
			L	S	R (L x S)	

The three columns (L,S,R) are for assessing the level or degree of risk. The first (L) is for an assessment of the likelihood of the hazard taking place, the second (S) for the severity of the hazard, based on the following:

(L) LIKELIHOOD

- Hazard exists very infrequently; limited numbers exposed
- Likely to occur; hazard exists intermittently or occurs occasionally
- Likely to occur soon; permanent hazard or occurs daily/repeatedly; many may be exposed

(S) SEVERITY OF HAZARD

- Could cause minor injury only
- Could cause major injury/3+ day's absence
- Could cause fatality/severe injury

(R) RISK LEVEL is the product of LxS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Very high risk score | 6 or 9 |
| Moderate risk score | 3 or 4 |
| Low priority risk score | 1 or 2 |

VERY HIGH RISKS NEED IMMEDIATE ACTION

Risk Assessment Record (continued)

Hazard	Will affect	Precautions and/or controls already in place to remove hazard or reduce risk level	Risk (with controls)			Additional controls needed
			L	S	R (L x S)	

The three columns (L,S,R) are for assessing the level or degree of risk. The first (L) is for an assessment of the likelihood of the hazard taking place, the second (S) for the severity of the hazard, based on the following:

(L) LIKELIHOOD

1. Hazard exists very infrequently; limited numbers exposed
2. Likely to occur; hazard exists intermittently or occurs occasionally
3. Likely to occur soon; permanent hazard or occurs daily/repeatedly; many may be exposed

(S) SEVERITY OF HAZARD

1. Could cause minor injury only
2. Could cause major injury/3+ day's absence
3. Could cause fatality/severe injury

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- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
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VERY HIGH RISKS NEED IMMEDIATE ACTION