

Gloves for handling bats

- to reduce the likelihood of getting bitten



There is no single type of glove suitable for handling the whole range of UK bat species. For instance, the type of glove one would use for picking up a wild noctule bat from the ground and placing it on a tree trunk would be very different from the sort of glove needed to administer first aid to a pip. BCT has spoken to a number of expert bat handlers and the SNCOs; below are details of some gloves that bat handlers may find suitable. If you have other suggestions please contact us at the Office to let us know.

The purpose of wearing gloves is to reduce the chance, as much as possible, of getting bitten. All who regularly handle bats should be fully vaccinated against rabies. In the event that you are bitten, wash the wound at once, gently but thoroughly, with soap and water and speak immediately to your GP to discuss post-exposure treatment. This applies even when you are fully vaccinated against rabies.

There are no definite rules for not getting bitten if you handle bats. A lot comes down to what works for you. If just picking up a grounded bat for release, use thick leather gloves. When handling for other reasons you may wish to use thinner gloves such as those detailed on this sheet. You may also want to wear a thicker glove on the hand holding the bat (the hand most likely to get bitten) and a thinner glove on the hand used for examining wings, measuring etc. All bats can bite through surgical type gloves; surgical type gloves are good for preventing bat saliva reaching the handler's skin. Depending upon the reason for handling, you may need to use different gloves for each bat to avoid saliva being passed from bat to bat. Take care when removing your gloves not to get saliva onto your skin.

For examining bats you may find it easier to use the cloth folding method, as follows. The bat is carefully wrapped in a soft cloth with the area needing examination exposed; by refolding the cloth different parts of the bat can be exposed without getting its mouth near you. You really need to practice this technique on captive bats before using it on wild bats, and you may need to use one cloth per bat in case saliva gets onto the cloth.

Also consider giving the bat something to bite on (such as an orange stick) which should take its attention away from your hand.

Glove suppliers:-

Thick leather gloves

- Thick leather gloves, available from most garden centres, prices vary
- Ladies' Rigger Gloves (P42) cost £5.15, Men's Heavy Duty Rigger Gloves (P45) cost £1.40, Hedging Gauntlet (P47) cost £3.51, all available from BTCV, telephone 01302 572200, (£1 postage and packing)

Thinner leather gloves

- RAF flying gloves available from Mart Aviation, telephone 01964 614766, sizes 7-10, super thin gloves, capeskin leather, elasticated wrist, approximate cost £30. Available in white, green, black. (These don't wash well but are quite good for sensitivity.)
- Leather riding gloves – likely to be slightly thicker leather than the flying gloves – purchase from tack shops, prices vary.
- Fine leather “dress” gloves from Marks & Spencer/John Lewis (no make specified), cost approx £35. (You can handle pips with them.)

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Bear in mind that leather gloves tend not to wash well – they may go quite stiff for a while afterwards. It would be best to wash them by hand.

Other gloves

- Showa 265 Assembly Grip Lite gloves from Globus, telephone 01595 696222 and ask for Sales, sizes small, medium, large. Fabric gloves with thin rubber coated palm and fingers, £4.99 per pair, if you explain they're for handling bats, carriage is only 50p. (OK for handling small to medium bats, sensitivity quite good – can handle a pip with them.)
- Nitrile gloves from Sentinel Laboratories, telephone 01444 484044, non-latex disposable N Dex nitrile gloves, box of one hundred 7005 powder free (all sizes) costs £12, box of one hundred 7005 powdered (all sizes) costs £10 plus carriage. (The powder is non talc, vegetable starch.) These gloves are thin, like surgical gloves, but a little more robust. (Mention price when ordering as this is a special price agreed with BCT.)
- Thin cotton gloves available from Boots the Chemist, cost £1.99. Hand wash only. (Similar also available from Superdrug.) (May be suitable for handling tame captives for show, can be bitten through.)
- Light and Grip by Roeckl are available from tack shops. Made of polyurethane, you could wash these while wearing them. Cost is £19.95. You could examine pips with these. They come in half sizes.

Species of Bat	Type of handling required	Suggested type of glove*
<i>Large bats, eg Noctule, Serotine, GHS, Leisler</i>	Minimal handling (eg placing in a box, placing on vertical surface for take-off)	Thick leather gloves, eg gardening gloves, rigger gloves
As above	Examination, measuring, sexing, weighing, etc	Thick leather glove on hand most likely to be bitten, thinner leather glove on "examining" hand. Consider wearing surgical type gloves underneath, or use cloth too
As above but where bat is used to being handled and calm	First aid	Thinner leather gloves, eg flying gloves. Consider wearing surgical type gloves underneath
<i>Medium sized bats, eg BLE, GLE, Barbastelle, Daubenton, Bechstein, Natterer</i>	Minimal handling (eg placing in a box, placing on vertical surface for take off)	Thick leather gloves such as rigger gloves
As above	Examination, measuring, sexing, weighing, etc	Thinner leather gloves eg riding/flying gloves. Consider wearing surgical type gloves underneath.
As above but where bat is used to being handled and calm	First aid	Showa Grip Lite, consider wearing surgical type gloves underneath
<i>Small bats, eg pips, whiskered/Brandt's</i>	Minimal handling (eg placing in a box, placing on vertical surface for take-off)	Thinner leather gloves/Showa Grip Lite
As above	Examination, measuring, sexing, weighing, etc	Showa Grip Lite
As above but where bat used to being handled and calm	First aid	Showa Grip Lite if possible. If not, use surgical type gloves

*Remember that large bats like noctules or serotines can bite through most things. You will need to decide on what sort of gloves to wear/techniques to use, which will depend on what you are doing with the bat, as well as its behaviour.

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Thanks go to bat workers, SNCOs and RSPB for their contributions