

Mammal tracks - droppings

The shape, colour, smell and texture of droppings are all clues to the identity of the animal that left them. Investigating with a small stick is a good way to reveal contents such as beetle wings or bones. The location of the droppings and the surrounding habitat can also provide clues. One useful indicator is the number of droppings: carnivores usually leave one or two droppings, whereas clusters of ten or more pellets are characteristic of herbivores.

Care should be taken when handling droppings as serious illnesses can be picked-up. The safest way to handle them is to use a small plastic bag as a glove and then turn it inside out around the dropping.

Hedgehogs



Blueish-black cylinders up to 5 cm in length. Indigestible fragments of insect prey – such as wing cases – appear an iridescent purple and green in the light.

Badger



Usually deposited in a shallow uncovered pit or latrine; blueish-black/brown, 5 cm long and 2 cm wide, pointed at one end and with a strong musk smell.

Fox

Black/grey, up to 12 cm long, often with twisted, tapered ends, and more slender than those of dogs. Contents such as fur, small bones, seeds and insect fragments are usually recognisable.



They are often deposited prominently, as territorial markers.



Rabbit



Round, dark greenish-brown/black, oval pellets about 10 mm across. Often in communal latrines consisting of hundreds of pellets.

Bats



Small, black cylindrical pellets around roosting sites; crumble easily, revealing shiny insect remains.

Rodents

Brown rat

Similar in size and appearance to black-olive stones – 12-16 mm long and pointed at one end.

House mouse

Cylindrical pellets about 6 mm long and 2 mm wide; unlike bat droppings, which look similar, they don't crumble. They smell of ammonia and often accumulate in latrines.



house mouse droppings