

Northumberland Bat Group: Bat Care Guidelines

Feeding bats in care

Water

All juvenile and adult bats should have access to water at all times. Water should be provided in a shallow dish, a milk bottle top works well. Bats should only be given bottled water and a calcium supplement needs to be added to the water. Zocal D is a liquid calcium supplement which is readily available (try reptile shops). Five drops of Zocal D should be added to a 500ml bottle of water.

Baby bats can drown in water bowls, it is best to leave them with a damp cloth or tissue in a shallow bowl

Mealworms

Bats in care will take mealworms, however mealworms alone do not provide a bat with all the nutrients it needs. Bats will also take wax worms although these are fattier for long term captives.

When you first buy mealworms you should transfer them to porridge oats and not feed them to a bat for 48 hours to allow any toxins to work their way out of the mealworms. Mealworms can be kept for several weeks, depending on temperature and the number of bats in care. As mealworms do not contain many nutrients, the food the mealworms eat will affect how beneficial they are to the bats. Mealworms need to be kept dry, a substrate of porridge oats, or even wholemeal bread can be a good base to keep them on and you should give them some apple, courgette, potato etc for moisture, but don't let them get wet and mouldy. A supplement is also needed to provide minerals and trace elements for the bats, Nutrobal and Pro-grub are reptile supplements, designed to be added to mealworms, a pinch a week should be sufficient. Mealworms should also be given a small amount of cat biscuits (not a fish flavour) as these contain taurine, essential for captive bats.

Hygiene

Each bat should have its 'own' bowls which should be kept clean. Milton can be used to sterilise the bowls and tanks (depending on what tanks you use) between bats. Tanks need to allow the bats to hang, fabric can be used but it needs to be smooth in texture to prevent bats claws snagging in it, kitchen towel can also be used, this can easily be replaced and then disposed of.

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