

Example answers to the questions provided in the document “ Guidance on key questions for selecting a conservation detection dog team” for bat carcass detection dog teams.

Example project: Dog teams are needed to survey six wind turbines in an upland area of Ireland. This is to measure the current fatality rates of bats for a repowering project. Turbines need to be searched every other day for a 10-day period in spring, summer and autumn. Any bats found need to be reported to the client within 24 hours with possible ID, GPS co-ordinates, and photograph of carcass in situ. Carcasses should be collected for possible DNA analysis. There are both sheep and cattle on site, and heavy machinery.

Questions	Answers Checklist	
Training	<p>Imprinting: Important point to check: Does the dog have a passive indication? This is important if the sample will need to be sent for DNA analysis. Example answer: Before imprinting, the dogs are trained to do a passive indication on a neutral odour like Kong. This is then paired with the target odour to ensure a passive indication on bat.</p>	
	<p>Samples used: Important point to check: Are the team licensed to hold training samples, and have they trained on a variety of bats? Example answer: Our team has a license to hold dead bats for the purpose of imprinting the dogs. The dogs are imprinted on a variety of carcasses, with variations in species, decomposition level, and size of body parts.</p>	
	<p>Contamination control: Important point to check: Are they trying to reduce contamination in their training samples? Example answer: Samples are contained in mylar bags, Ziploc bags or glass jars. They are only ever touched with gloves and sterilised tweezers.</p>	
	<p>Habitats: Important point to check: Ask about the specific habitats related to the area where you are asking the team to work. Example answer: All training and testing were performed in habitat similar to wind farms in Ireland, including thick rushes and undulating terrain.</p>	
Testing	<p>Trials: Important point to check: Make sure the team have discriminated against other possible carcasses found in the area so as not to accidentally inflate the number of bat finds or increase the number of DNA samples taken. Example answer: Dogs underwent discrimination trials to ensure they were only indicating on bat carcass and not rodent or frog.</p>	
	<p>Blinding: Important point to check: Blinding in some form is required, preferably double-blind testing, where the dog and handler are unaware of where the sample is hidden, and the tester is not visible to the search team during the search and does not reveal the target's location until the end of the test. Example answer: Searcher efficiency trials were set up in areas of similar habitat to wind farms, and were double-blind.</p>	
	<p>Samples used: Important point to check: Testing samples must be different from the training samples, and be representative of the species going to be found in the area the team will be working. Example answer: The samples used for training are different to the samples used for testing, using a minimum of 20 different carcasses in a range of decomposition states and a minimum of two bat species (one pipistrelle species and Leisler's). Testing is performed before every bat season and each team must exceed 90% efficiency before each season.</p>	
Experience	<p>Ecological: Important point to check: The team has experience working in the habitats required, and if they need to do anything specific when they find the target they have had training to do that. Example answer: This CDD Handler has been operational on wind farms and other ecological sites for the past 4 years and has undertaken specific ecological training, e.g. bat carcass identification and the use of a GPS device.</p>	
	<p>Operational: Important point to check: Does the team have evidence of experience in operational work and efficiency trials? For newer teams, this could include shadowing experienced teams. Is there a health and safety qualification needed to get onto the site? Example answer: This CDD handler has a LANTRA qualification as a conservation detection dog handler and has been handling dogs at wind farms since 2021. Every handler has a CSR/CSCS card or Irish Safe pass. This team consistently get over 90 per cent during efficiency trials, in a variety of weather conditions and vegetation complexity.</p>	
	<p>Experience of dog: Important point to check: Preferably, the dogs used have found operational finds of different bat species and target sizes. Example answer: The dogs chosen for this project have been operational since 2022 and have multiple finds for various species of bats, including common and soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, and Leisler's bat species. They have also found wings of bats and body parts that had to be sent for DNA analysis, alongside full fresh carcasses. They are safe to work around livestock and machinery.</p>	

Odours	<p>Imprinted on: Important point to check: Are there any odours that could be confused with bat carcasses? Example answer: CDDs are imprinted on a neutral odour, which is Kong. This is only used for training and won't be an issue on wind farms. Operationally the dogs are also imprinted on rare plants which are not found at wind farm sites.</p>	
	<p>Geographic locations: Important point to check: Are there any odours that could overlap with bat carcasses geographically that could take up time or be confused with bat carcasses? Example answer: Our dogs are used for other projects, but this does not affect their ability to find bats at turbines. These projects include rare plants that do not grow in this area.</p>	
Welfare – General	<p>Hydration and nutrition: Important point to check: Has the handler considered when the dog will receive fresh water and food during working days? Example answer: Each dog has access to water when undertaking regular breaks which is checked and topped up regularly. Feeding is kept to similar routine as when not working, with considerations being made depending on work time/conditions.</p>	
	<p>Veterinary Care: Important point to check: Do the CDDs used have adequate veterinary care? Example Answer: All dogs are provided yearly vet checks, biannual physio checks, and preventative tick treatment monthly as a minimum. Physio and vet care is increased as and when needed.</p>	
Welfare – Work Specific	<p>Transparency: Important point to check: Are the teams open about how they train by allowing you to come along and watch them train or work? Or can they send you videos of the teams working? Example answer: We are more than happy to have potential clients come and shadow our teams, or we can send videos of our training sessions.</p>	
	<p>Rest: Important point to check: The team is aware of the length of time their dogs can work and have considered rest periods for the dogs. Example answer: On-site, all teams will have at least two dogs, allowing adequate rest between searches. Generally, searches last between 20-40 mins, depending on weather conditions and vegetation complexity.</p>	
	<p>Environmental conditions: Important point to check: What temperature range will the dogs be able to work in, and can the handler recognise signs of heat stress in the dogs? Example answer: Handlers are trained to recognise signs of heat stress and hypothermia in individual dogs, and have the equipment available to deal with both situations. All work is halted if temperatures exceed what the dogs are habituated to.</p>	
	<p>First Aid: Important point to check: Do all the teams have suitable qualifications to care for the dogs? (RAMS required for sites generally only consider the hazards to the human element of the team) Example answer: All handlers have a canine first aid certification and first aid kits available.</p>	
	<p>Transport: Important point to check: Are the dogs being transported safely and in compliance with current legislation? Are the vehicles providing adequate ventilation, especially in the event of possible conditions the teams may encounter during the season they are working? Example answer: All the vans in the company adhere to EU guidelines and are kitted out with individual crash-tested crates, roof fans, leisure batteries, and digital thermometers.</p>	
Dog Team Resources	<p>Number: Important point to check: Are there enough dogs and handlers available to cover the size of the project you have? This should include a contingency plan if dogs or handlers get sick or injured. Example answer: Currently, we have four fully trained and experienced dogs in each dog team. Three dog handlers are in-house, and a range of fully tested subcontractors have additional dogs if there is illness or injury within the team.</p>	
	<p>Dog suitability: Important point to check: Are you happy with the dogs being supplied? Are they of an appropriate age, breed and experience level to work on this exact project? Example answer: We envisage this project needing two dogs with another as a backup in case of injury. These dogs are, an English springer spaniel who is five and has been searching for bat carcasses since 2022, a German shorthaired pointer who is seven and has been operational since 2022; an English springer spaniel, who is four and has been operational since 2024. All dogs have been worked around livestock and machinery.</p>	