# Concerns grow over sick red squirrels in Bridge of Allan



Concerns are mounting in the Bridge of Allan area near Stirling, Scotland, following reports of lethargic and sick red squirrels. Local residents have spotted these symptomatic animals in or around Mine Wood, raising fears that they may be afflicted by squirrelpox, a virus that proves lethal to red squirrels.

The squirrelpox virus is transmitted by grey squirrels, who are carriers of the disease but do not experience its harmful effects. Since its first documented outbreak in Scotland in 2007, when it was identified near Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway, the virus has continued to pose a significant threat to red squirrel populations. Notably, the first confirmed death of a red squirrel from squirrelpox north of the central belt occurred in Dunfermline, Fife, during the spring of the previous year.

Gail Turney, the programme manager of Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels, a partnership project with the Scottish Wildlife Trust, expressed her concern regarding the situation. "We are concerned regarding this latest news and are extremely grateful to those members of the public who have brought it to our attention," she noted. The project is advising residents in the area to take proactive measures to mitigate the risk of disease transmission.

Residents are urged to take down all wildlife feeders for the upcoming month, which could help limit potential spread. Turney explained, “We don’t know for certain what these squirrels may be suffering from as red squirrels can be affected by a number of illnesses, especially during the winter.” The project has also encouraged the community to diligently monitor for any further instances of sick or deceased red squirrels, advising that photographs be taken and emailed to the conservation team at squirrels@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Symptoms of squirrelpox include sores, ulcers, scabs, and weeping lesions located on the face, paws, and genital areas. These afflictions can severely hinder the squirrels' abilities to eat, drink, or move comfortably. The virus is typically fatal within two weeks, leading to significant declines within local red squirrel populations.

The red squirrel, a native species to the UK, is increasingly threatened by the encroachment of grey squirrels, originally introduced from North America during the Victorian era. In addition to being carriers of the squirrelpox virus, grey squirrels outcompete red squirrels for food and habitat, leading to displacement. As a result, around 80% of the UK’s remaining red squirrel population is concentrated in Scotland.

While squirrelpox poses no risk to human health, observers who encounter sick red squirrels are advised to maintain their distance and contact the Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels project for appropriate guidance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.shropshirestar.com/uk-news/2025/02/25/possible-squirrelpox-reported-further-north-than-previous-cases/> - This article corroborates the reports of lethargic and sick red squirrels in Bridge of Allan near Stirling, raising concerns about a potential squirrelpox outbreak.
* <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5189052/bridge-of-allan-squirrelpox/> - This article supports the alert issued for locals to be vigilant for dead or sick-looking red squirrels in Bridge of Allan, following suspected cases of squirrelpox.
* <https://www.ccbridgeofallan.org.uk/sick-red-squirrels-in-bridge-of-allan-alert/> - This community alert advises residents to report sick squirrels and provides guidance on how to handle such sightings, aligning with the concerns about squirrelpox in the area.
* <https://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/conservation-projects/saving-scotlands-red-squirrels/> - This webpage details the efforts of Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels, a project concerned with protecting red squirrel populations, which is relevant to the situation in Bridge of Allan.
* <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-9ZLW6K> - This webpage provides information on squirrelpox and its impact on red squirrel populations, supporting the claim that the virus is lethal to red squirrels and transmitted by grey squirrels.