



DISEASE IN SQUIRRELS

Squirrels carry a variety of internal and external parasites, including lice, ticks and mites. Although most cause little discomfort to the animals, two in particular are known for their severe, often fatal, effects.

Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis is caused by a parasitic protozoan, which lives in the gut. It is thought that this contributed to the dramatic drop in the number of red (and grey) squirrels in Britain between 1900 and 1925. Unfortunately, whilst grey squirrel numbers began to rise again, red squirrel populations never recovered.

Squirrelpox Virus

Squirrelpox virus is a disease that is fatal to red squirrels and is a significant factor in the decline of red squirrel populations in the UK. Please see our [Squirrelpox virus](#) page for more information.

The RSSS project is carrying out a **Squirrelpox Surveillance Program** to identify any areas where Squirrelpox outbreaks are occurring, or that may be at risk of an outbreak. To do this we need to blood samples from grey squirrels. Grey squirrels that have been exposed to the virus will have developed immunity, and the analysis of blood samples will check for antibodies to the virus. Where grey squirrels are found to have **Squirrelpox virus**, the project will alert the public to the outbreak and increase the trapping effort in that area to try to reduce the likelihood of an outbreak of the disease in red squirrels.