

Health and Safety Matters

Volunteer Health and Safety Newsletter



Issue 5, Spring 2023

Cotswold Outdoor Discount

Trust volunteers can receive a 20% discount. This is valid on full-priced items (excludes electronics and selected lines) both in-store and online with Cotswold Outdoor, Runners Need and Snow+Rock. The discounts are for personal use only.

[Cotswold Outdoor](#) discount code:

AF-WILDLIFE-E1

The discount is offered by Cotswold Outdoor to supporters and friends of Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK.

The Trust's **Lone Working Policy** has recently been reviewed and revised. Subject to Council approval the revised policy is expected to be reissued shortly.

A new overarching **vibration risk assessment** for Reserves and related activities using power tools has been completed.

Contact the H&S Manager or your Primary Contact for copies of updated policies, risk assessments and safe working procedures or visit the [H&S SharePoint Site](#) – contact H&S Manager for access

Volunteer health and safety newsletter

The purpose of this quarterly Health and Safety Newsletter is to communicate key updates on health and safety to our Volunteers. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions for the Newsletter please contact Justin Tyas, H&S Manager – contact details below.

Leptospirosis ([Weil's disease](#))

Leptospirosis, also called Weil's disease, is an infection you can get from animals. It's rare in the UK. Leptospirosis is spread in the pee of infected animals – most commonly rats, mice, cows, pigs and dogs.

You can get leptospirosis if:

- soil or freshwater (such as water from a river, canal or lake) that contains infected pee gets in your mouth, eyes or a cut
- you touch an infected animal's blood or flesh – usually from working with animals or animal parts

It's very rare to get leptospirosis from pets, other people or bites

The diseases start with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache, which can lead to vomiting and muscle pains and ultimately to jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure. In rare cases the diseases can be fatal.

How can I prevent it?

- Wash cuts and grazes immediately with soap and running water and cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work
- Wash your hands after handling any animal, or any contaminated clothing or other materials and always before eating, drinking or smoking
- Wear protective clothing if you're at risk through your job – this is determined by risk assessment and where necessary documented in relevant Safe Working Procedures
- Shower as soon as possible if you've been in potentially infected water

What else should I do?

Report any illness immediately to your doctor and tell your Primary Contact

OPM (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) caterpillars on the move on a tree in spring.



First Aid Policy: Training Standards from 2024

The Trust has determined that for outdoor working the following courses (or agreed equivalents) are the standard to be applied:

Outdoor First Aid Level 2 with Forestry Commission syllabus (“+F”) – 16 hours (2-days)

- For higher risk profile activities including chainsaw operations / leading a work party

Outdoor First Aid Level 1 (“+F”) – 8 hours (1-day)

- Lower risk profile activities – for example where power tools other than chainsaws are used / leading outdoor activity other than work party

Note:

OFA L2+F is currently necessary for all chainsaw operations with a secondary first aider where necessary

Safety doesn't happen by accident

Oak Processionary Moths (OPMs)

OPMs are pests that are now commonplace across Europe, especially during spring and summer. In its caterpillar form, this invasive species is not only harmful to trees but also poses a threat to humans. Workers in forestry, road construction, pest control, and landscaping are particularly exposed to this hazard, which can cause varying allergic reaction.

Why are OPMs a risk to humans?

OPM caterpillars have fine hairs on their bodies, which contain a protein called thaumetopoein. This protein can trigger allergic reactions when it comes into contact with human or animal skin. Symptoms include itching and skin inflammation. In some cases, fever and dizziness also occur as well as eye and respiratory tract irritation.

Persons who encounter OPM caterpillars should seek medical assistance as the severity of allergic reactions differs from person to person.

Unfortunately, the sensitivity to thaumetopoein and the intensity of the allergic reaction increases with each exposure. For this reason, every effort should be taken to avoid contact with OPM caterpillars even when exposure is limited in duration or frequency.

If you suspect OPM you must avoid it and immediately notify your Primary Contact.

New First Aid Policy – agreed by Council March 2023

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 (as amended) require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to ensure their employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or taken ill at work (including Trust volunteer activities)

What is '*adequate and appropriate*' will depend on the circumstances in the workplace. Employers should carry out an assessment of first-aid needs to determine what to provide. There is no legal requirement to formally record first aid needs assessments. However, the Trust has a First Aid Needs Assessment Template that is designed as a starting point for assessing need and determining provision.

A First Aider is '*someone who has undertaken suitable training and has an appropriate First Aid qualification and remains competent to perform their role.*'

The Trust has now agreed training standards as referenced in our First Aid Policy. Anyone leading a work party is strongly encouraged to attend Outdoor First Aid Level 2 (OFA L2) + Forestry (F). From 2024 when new training dates are organised, anyone currently leading work parties will need to be trained OLA L2+F when their current certification expires.

Contact

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**Herts &
Middlesex**
Wildlife Trust