



How to record Field Voles

Field voles live in rough grassland (although they can be found elsewhere) and are common in Sussex, although they are under recorded because the animals themselves are seldom seen and are difficult to identify when glimpsed in the grass.

Methods:

The best time of year to survey is Spring through to Autumn when both populations and grass are high! The best way to determine the presence of field voles is to look for their runs and latrines under long grass. In the runs you may find characteristic small, green, oval-shaped droppings which are a sure sign of the recent presence of field voles. The droppings are usually deposited in large piles and are 6-7mm long. Other signs to look for include pieces of cut grass which have been nibbled at an angle at each end.



Field Vole droppings by Sarah Patton



Field Vole run and feeding signs by Sarah Patton

The standard method is based on searching a set area. This is ten, 1m x 1m quadrats spaced at 10m intervals along the maximum length of the field. You will need to search each quadrat with a standard effort of 5 minutes per quadrat using one person. If you are working in pairs this can be cut in half so each quadrat has the same effort. You will need to record presence of runs, latrines, feeding signs and burrows, but don't worry about counting them, just their presence will do. Finding all four signs will help to confirm presence so please look for all four during surveying and record their presence in the quadrat (see field form). Please do a minimum of ten quadrats per site. If the site is large you can do more or section the field into different areas and do ten in each area. Although it would be more useful to see if they are in another field. Please give us a brief description of what you actually do on the survey form.

Even if you don't find any signs please send us your survey form as this will also help us to confirm absence at a site.

Please ensure land owner permission is sought before the survey if the site is privately owned.

ALWAYS TELL SOMEONE WHERE YOU ARE GOING OR TAKE SOMEONE WITH YOU.

Field Vole Survey Sheet

Recorders name: _____

Contact details: Tel number, e-mail or address: _____

Date of survey: _____

Name of site: _____

Grid reference and description of site location: _____

No. of 1m x 1m quadrats completed: _____

Approximate time searching at each quadrat: _____

How many people searched: _____

Which signs did you find (tick for presence – leave blank for absence). Leave shaded area blank.

	Runways	Latrines	Feeding signs	Burrows	No. of signs				Total no. with any indicators
					1	2	3	4	
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
No. out of 10									

Any extra information:

Sketch of site and description of what you did: