

THE POX – ACTION ALERT

MELBREAK WILDLIFE GROUP and FRIENDS

Louise Edwards from WLSI has just contacted us to report the death of a **Red Squirrel**, in the Loweswater area, very likely from **Squirrel Pox**.

Squirrel pox virus (SQPV) is **highly** infectious, invariably lethal to Reds. It can spread rapidly and quickly wipe out a whole population. Grey squirrels are asymptomatic carriers. Infection is passed on via shared contaminated surfaces, especially from squirrel and bird feeding stations.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

One. Louise asks that everyone with feeders in the area, cleans them thoroughly (especially scrub off old seed and nut debris), and then disinfects them. The recommended disinfectant is VIRKON S, used by vets and poultry keepers. It is easy to use (2 x tablets dissolved in 500ml water in spray bottle), and **safe** to the person. Obviously read instructions, handle safely away from children and pets; eyes and hands should be protected (example instructions attached).

Two. Louise and Peter have arranged to leave a supply of Virkon S tablets at the KirkStile and with Heather at Scale Hill by Saturday afternoon (Loweswater end).

We have a container of 50 here at Watergate Barn, Loweswater. Tanya has arranged the same for Lorton from Sunday (2 Smithy Fold, High Lorton.). Both of us will leave the containers in the porch. Perhaps take two tablets which should last you a bit – read the instructions! WLSI may arrange other points if you don't get some. Virkon S can be bought via the internet (e.g. Amazon and other outlets) and I believe at County Store, Cockermonth. Friends might share as it comes in a pot of 50?!

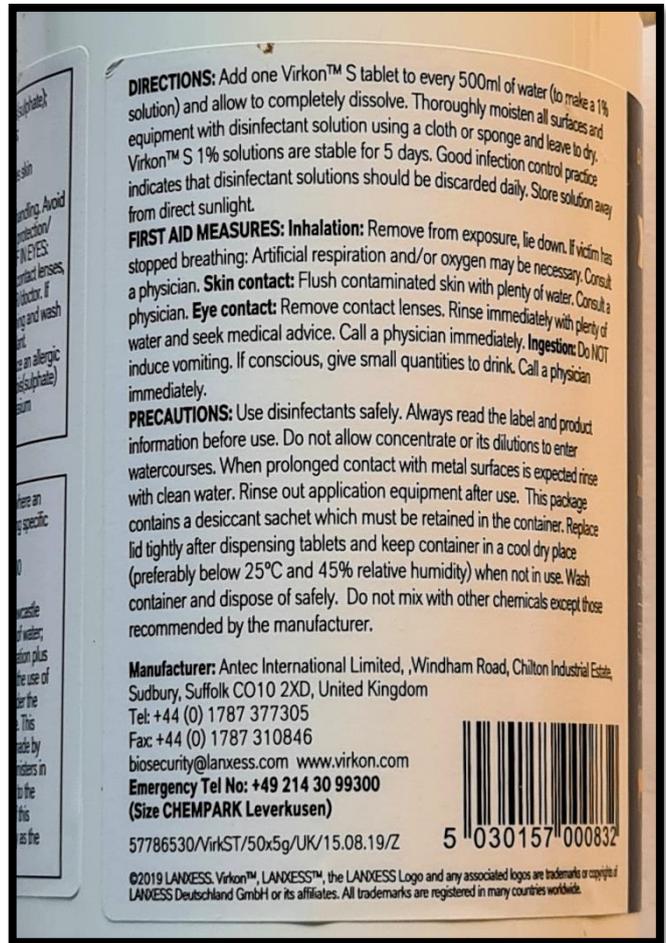
Enhanced Grey Squirrel management has been started by WLSI volunteers, as Grey movements will spread the disease.

Three. Please pass on the message to relevant local people/ friends who might not get this Melbreak Wildlife Group WhatsApp.

Four. Please report any sightings of 'ill looking' Reds and any sightings of Greys asap to WLSI wlsi@hotmail.co.uk, or to Louise on 07881412809.

Hopefully with combined action we can help our Red Squirrels in the valleys which we all cherish.

Thanks, John and Rosamund Macfarlane 14.7.23



In red squirrels, the virus causes skin ulcers, lesions, and scabs, with swelling and discharge near the eyes, mouth, feet, and genitalia. They become increasingly lethargic and shivery with death following.

Thanks to Andrew Locking for photo from 2021