



Badgers & Bovine TB

BACKGROUND:

Bovine TB costs the UK millions of pounds every year. The disease predominantly affects cattle but can be transmitted between other species, one of which is the badger. The UK's wild badger population is known to be a significant reservoir for the disease, and as such, the Coalition Government has committed to developing affordable options for a policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine TB. The Government has published its policy on bovine TB control in July 2011, following consultation in 2010 on a proposed licensed badger cull in affected areas in England. A review of the scientific evidence regarding the eradication of bTB in Wales is expected to report to the Welsh Assembly Government in autumn 2011.

OUR POLICY:

The Wildlife Trusts are very conscious of the hardship that bovine TB (bTB) causes in the farming community and the need to find the right mechanisms to control the disease. Our work in providing advice to farmers across the UK means we recognise and value the crucial contribution that environmentally-friendly farming practices make to wildlife. The Wildlife Trusts have concluded from the available scientific evidence that the Government's proposals for badger culling in England would be unsuccessful in helping to control bTB. The science suggests that, if implemented, these proposals could make the bTB problem worse. This is due to the 'perturbation effect' from culling, causing badgers to range more widely and increasing the risks of disease transmission.

The Wildlife Trusts believe a number of different measures are needed to eradicate bovine TB. They should include:

- **Badger vaccination** – to prevent disease transmission from badger to badger and from badger to cattle. We also urge Defra to continue development of an oral badger vaccine;
- **Biosecurity** – all possible measures should be pursued to prevent disease transmission between cattle on-farm. Not all the control measures recommended by the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB have been implemented;
- **Cattle vaccination** – development of a cattle vaccine should be pursued as a matter of priority by Government as the most desirable and long-term solution to bovine TB.

THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS' KEY MESSAGES:

- Bovine TB (bTB) costs the UK millions of pounds every year and The Wildlife Trusts recognise the hardship that it causes in the farming community. However, we believe that a badger cull is not the answer.
- The Wildlife Trusts believe a number of different measures are needed to eradicate bovine TB, including badger vaccination, improved bio-security and cattle vaccination.

WHAT THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS ARE DOING:

- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is taking a lead on injectable badger vaccination, using this method in ten nature reserves throughout 2011.
- We are urging the Government to rethink proposals for a cull in England. We believe the Government should:
 - Implement a short to medium term programme of badger vaccination to reduce bTB transmission from badgers to cattle.
 - Regulate on-farm bio-security measures to reduce cattle to cattle and cattle to badger transmission.
 - Facilitate the development of a cattle vaccine along with a change to EU legislation to allow a cattle vaccine to be used

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?

- Write to MPs to make change happen –
- Join your local Wildlife Trust to increase the impact of our voice.