



Scottish Badgers

Comments on Bovine TB in England and Wales.

Reasons to welcome a delay on a proposed cull of badgers.

25 April 2011

Executive Summary

1. The Westminster Government's proposals for a badger cull have been comprehensively discredited. Bovine TB is spread principally as a result of keeping infected **cattle** in the herd then exacerbated following inadequate testing by moving them around the country. This has been tragically compounded with recent revelations (March 2011) from various Trading Standards authorities. They discovered that there had been a practice of swapping ear-tags following bTB testing, which resulted in infected cattle remaining in the herd and healthy cattle going to slaughter.
2. Over the past two years there has been, in England and Wales, more rigorous testing regimes, more stringent biosecurity strategies and movement restrictions on cattle – following the example of Scottish policies.
3. To maintain this momentum and to reinforce such measures, there needs to be the use of vaccines for both cattle and badgers. With such a concerted approach the decline in herd infections would be accelerated and many desired humane benefits – including peace of mind for rural communities – would result.
4. The Westminster Government should not delay lobbying the European Commission to adopt a policy of vaccinating cattle against Bovine TB.

Statement

Scottish Badgers welcomes the recent statement from **Jim Paice** the Westminster Government's Minister of State for Agriculture, that there is to be a delay in his decision to proceed with the culling of badgers in England.

Given restrictions on cattle movements and improved biosecurity strategies implemented over the last two years, there has at last been a decline in bTB in England with even better results in Wales (a 35% decline). In Scotland there has never been any serious doubt that these measures work.

All available resources now need to be channelled by the Westminster Government into lobbying for an urgent European Commission review of legislation and offering guidance concerning food production from vaccinated cattle. This would boost trade for farmers throughout Britain and the continent of Europe. The Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine has been used in the past to protect cattle but it was then withdrawn because of difficulties with recognising an infected animal from a vaccinated one. However this problem has been solved by scientists in very recent times. They have managed to add to the vaccine a marker which identifies the status of an animal.

Hopefully the Westminster Government is once and for all convinced that clear scientific evidence shows that culling badgers is more likely to exacerbate bTB than improve the situation. An injectable vaccine is already available and an oral version is under development. These provide further potential solutions and far better use of resources which could lead to the day when the shameful practice of culling mostly healthy badgers will never again be repeated. We owe it to future generations to win the bTB battle without having to kill a single badger in any country.

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