

UPDATE ON BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS ERADICATION/CONTROL PROVISIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

[This supplements the narrative contained within the Assembly Research Paper (pages 18 & 23) produced by Mark Allen on 10 November 2011 – Annex J]

England

- The Coalition Government have given a commitment to introduce, as part of a package of measures, a carefully-managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high incidence of TB in cattle. Following consultation on 14 December 2011 Defra announced their intention to proceed with two TB badger trial cull pilots in England as part of a package of measures to address bovine TB.
- Natural England would issue licences under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Defra will invite the farming industry to come forward with a shortlist of areas. Natural England will assess the applications against the licence criteria. It is proposed that the two trial pilot culls will begin after the Olympics in 2012.
- Defra anticipate that groups of farmers who receive the appropriate licences will employ contractors to carry out the culling operation. All those involved in badger culling will be required to undertake specific training and demonstrate their competence. The policy is based on a cost-sharing approach with the farming industry.
- There will be strict criteria that applicants for a licence to cull badgers would have to meet. Operators would need a Deer Stalking Certificate or equivalent qualification, and will need to attend a Government-approved course and assessment.
- On 9 February 2012, the Badger Trust wrote to Defra giving them notice of the grounds of legal challenge they intend to pursue if Defra proceed with their policy, i.e. seeking a Judicial Review of the Defra proposals.

Wales

- On 21 June 2011, Mr John Griffiths AM, the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development announced that he had commissioned a review of the scientific evidence base regarding the eradication of bovine TB in Wales. Plans made under the previous administration for a badger cull in the Intensive Action Area of West Wales were put on hold pending the outcome of that review.
- On 20 March 2012 John Griffiths AM, WAG Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development announced a programme of badger vaccination (rather than culling) following that review.
- Mr Griffiths advised that any decision to cull would need to be justified on the basis that it would be necessary to eliminate or substantially reduce the incidence of bovine TB in cattle. He stated that after considering the evidence provided to him, including scientific and legal advice, that he was not at present satisfied that a cull of badgers would be necessary to bring about a substantial reduction in the incidence of bovine TB in cattle in which case he could not authorise a cull under the Animal Health Act 1981.