



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

11 August 2017

Dear ,

ATISN 11396 FOI Request: Wales TB Eradication Plan

Thank you for your request which I received on 17 July 2017. You asked for the following information:

- The scientific evidence on which you have based the decision to include the small scale killing of badgers in the "Wales TB Eradication Plan" announced on 27 June 2017.

A targeted test and remove operation such as is being planned has not been tried before, other than small scale research (Woodroffe 1999). The National Wildlife Management Centre (APHA) ecologists acknowledge this approach is certainly different to the reactive culls.

- Any advice that has been received from the Chief Vet and/or the Animal and Plant Health Agency regarding small scale culling and the likelihood of perturbation spreading TB to neighbouring land.

The following advice was provided to the cabinet secretary by the Chief Veterinary Officer following consultation with APHA.

The conclusion from the Randomised Badger Cull Trial (RBCT) was that localised badger culling can actually increase TB incidence in cattle. As the RBCT reactive culls were stopped prematurely, there is a view that the results may be unreliable. A number of papers have challenged these findings (More et al 2007) - argued that the data do not provide sufficient evidence to rule out an alternative hypotheses and (More & McGrath 2015) raised issues that warrant further discussion and study.

The delivery model we are proposing for the removal of badgers is not a repeat of the reactive cull element of the RBCT and will be combined with enhanced

cattle controls and testing and improved biosecurity. There is evidence that social perturbation in badger populations happens in the wake of culling operations and it is a plausible explanation for the observed outcomes of the RBCT. However, we have little information on what perturbation looks like at the local scale and exactly how it relates to epidemiological outcomes.

On balance, it is a reasonable approach to test how badgers respond to low levels of removal but the outcomes of this approach remain uncertain. Better understanding of biosecurity protocols to separate species and protect local cattle herds means we are less vulnerable to the hypothesised adverse effects caused by perturbation.

As part of our badger removal operation we look to work with colleagues in APHA to develop processes to gather data and develop systems to analyse the results to:

- Examine the effect on the status of the chronic breakdown herd (Though this will can only be measured as a result of the combined measures applied)
 - Monitor the incidence in the surrounding cattle herds.
 - Better understand the effect on the social structure of badgers i.e. local perturbation).
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- Any risk assessment of the policy to kill badgers on a small scale on farms with persistent bovine TB.

Please see previous response.

- The guidance that will be given to the vets or others with the task of deciding if badgers will be killed on a farm with persistent TB breakdown herds.

The enclosed protocol will be used to establish whether badgers will be killed on a chronic breakdown farm.

- An estimate of the number of farms on which badgers will be killed under the "Wales TB Eradication Plan" and the number of badgers that will be killed

There are approximately 50 to 60 herds classified as chronic breakdown herds. Not all of these breakdowns will require badger test and removal operations. To date, 9 farms have been surveyed for badger activity where it is the view of the case vet that badgers are involved with persistence of disease in the herd. It is not possible at this time to estimate the number of badgers that will test positive and be humanely euthanised.

- What measures will be taken to warn owners of surrounding land that nearby badger culling could negatively impact them.

Due to the security required to protect the anonymity of the land owner involved, no contact has been made with owners of surrounding land.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: FreedomOfInformationOfficer@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely