



Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Badgers and Bovine TB policy: May 2016

1. Introduction

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust is very conscious of the hardship that bovine TB (bTB) causes the farming community and the need to find the right mechanisms to control the disease.

Herefordshire lies within the bTB high risk area, where the prevalence of bTB in herds is in the region of 9%, as defined by Defra in 2014. The Government aim is to achieve Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status for England by 2038.

Badgers are recognised as carriers of bovine TB and this has resulted in repeated calls for culling of the badger population.

This policy statement aims to set out and explain Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's position on badger culling and bovine TB and outline future actions in pursuance of this policy

2. Position Statement on Badger Culling

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust is opposed to the indiscriminate culling of badgers.

As a movement, the Wildlife Trusts are urging the Government to drop culling from its bTB strategy and prioritise badger vaccination, alongside a comprehensive package of cattle measures including improved TB testing and development of a cattle vaccine.

3. Position Statement on Badger Vaccination

To have a substantial effect on bTB, badger vaccination must be deployed on a larger scale and in conjunction with cattle measures. This will require Government support for the development of a national badger vaccination strategy.

Overall, the Wildlife Trusts' aim is for the Trusts' vaccination efforts to contribute to a strategic and coordinated programme of badger vaccination, by working in partnership to target vaccination projects to the areas where they will have the greatest benefit. Generally, vaccination will be targeted to:

- The High-Risk area, where bTB is most prevalent;
- The Edge area, where the aim is to create a 'firewall' to prevent further spread of bTB out of the High Risk area.

Vaccination will generally not be targeted to the Low Risk area because bTB is not endemic in these counties; there is no recognised wildlife reservoir and no proposals to cull badgers.

The goals of this vaccination strategy are:

- To demonstrate that vaccination is a practical, cost-effective option;
- To advocate its use;
- To have an impact on the level of bovine TB.

Herefordshire is within a High-Risk area, but there is no Government-supported, strategic, co-ordinated programme of badger vaccination in the County.

3. Scientific background to this position

Since the Randomised Badger Control Trial and report of the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB in 2007, scientific experts have consistently concluded that culling badgers can make no meaningful contribution to controlling bTB in Britain. This is due to the 'perturbation effect', where disruption to badger social groups results in an increased risk of disease transmission.

Scientific experts have also agreed that, because 'controlled shooting' will be the primary method of culling, the outcome of the trial culls is more unpredictable than the Randomised Badger Control Trial. Despite this level of uncertainty, there will be no scientific evaluation of the impact on bTB from the pilot culls.

Although there is no 'quick fix' to the bTB problem, The Wildlife Trusts believe that Government efforts to tackle the disease should focus on:

- Biosecurity: Effective implementation of all possible measures to prevent disease transmission.
- Badger vaccination: Develop a clear strategy for deployment of the injectable BadgerBCG vaccine and continue development of an oral badger vaccine.
- Cattle vaccination: Secure change to EU regulation to permit use of a cattle vaccine and develop a strategy for its deployment.

4. Key actions

a) Policy position

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust will continue to uphold The Wildlife Trusts' policy positions within Herefordshire, as described above.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust will oppose any plans for indiscriminate badger culling in Herefordshire.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust supports badger vaccination, on a strategic scale, as a part of a package of measures to control the disease.

b) Practical action

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust will not permit badger culling on any of our Nature Reserves or land holdings.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust does not currently have the resources to initiate or deliver a badger vaccination in Herefordshire at the scale required, nor in association with the other measures required.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years, or sooner if:

- Further scientific evidence becomes available
- Further resources become available
- Defra introduces a package of measures on a county level

Signed off by Conservation Committee
10th May 2016