

Badger cull proposals

- Government is strongly minded to proceed with a policy of badger control as part of a package of measures to address bovine TB;
- New draft guidance for licensing a badger cull published by Defra - consultation with stakeholders, including TWT, until 20 September 2011 on the draft guidance (not on the proposed policy generally);
- Final decision to be made in Autumn 2011.

If Government proceeds with the policy:

- Two pilots in 2012 to ensure 'controlled shooting' is both effective and humane (in reducing the badger population) - areas to be determined by the farming industry;
- A panel of independent scientific experts to monitor the results and advise the Secretary of State over whether further licences should be issued;
- A maximum of ten licences should be granted each year;
- Natural England, on behalf of the Secretary of State, will determine applications for culling and vaccination licences on a case-by-case basis;
- Policy to be reviewed after four years.

Licence applications would need to meet the following criteria:

- The application must cover an area of at least 150km²;
- There must be access for culling to at least 70% of the total land area in the application;
- The size and number of inaccessible areas within the application area should be minimised, with at least 90% of the land within the application area either accessible or within 200m of accessible land;
- Culling must be co-ordinated on accessible land across the entire control area and be sustained, which means it must be carried out annually (but not in closed seasons) for the duration of the licence (minimum of 4 years). The killing/taking of badgers will be limited to a six-week cull period;
- Two culling methods will be permitted (which can be used in combination, or as single control methods) cage-trapping followed by shooting or controlled shooting;
- Applicants must put in place reasonable measures to mitigate the risk to non-participating farmers and landowners of a potential increase in confirmed new incidents of TB in vulnerable livestock within the control area and in the 2km ring surrounding the control area; and to protect the interests of any non-farming interests that may be affected by badger control;
- Statutory TB controls, biosecurity measures and TB testing must be undertaken.

Details of the proposed badger control policy and consultation are available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/07/19/bovine-tb/>

Vaccination

Defra is providing £7.9 million in 2011/12 for their TB research programme which includes work on development of an oral badger vaccine and injectable cattle vaccine.

Defra is proposing to make up to £250,000 a year of new funding available to support farmers and landowners who plan to vaccinate badgers. The first grants would be available to support any vaccination taking place from 2012. More details on how to apply for funding will be published shortly.