1. BVA welcomes the further clarification received from Defra on how the Government intends to implement the Independent Expert Panel’s recommendations for improving effectiveness and humaneness of badger culling using controlled shooting in the pilot areas.

2. BVA agrees that there has been considerable progress and that Defra has made a number of welcome changes and clarifications in response to the BVA position. In particular, Defra has confirmed that
   a. as requested by BVA, shotguns will not be used, except for the purpose of despatching cage-trapped badgers;
   b. contractor selection, training and assessment has been enhanced and field observation of a minimum of 60 badgers being shot will take place alongside post-mortems of a random sample of 60 carcases identified to the individual marksman from each area;
   c. there will be more stringent, comprehensive requirements relating to operational planning to ensure contractors are better deployed and distributed along with more stringent data reporting requirements and the provision of real-time information on the progress of the cull.

3. Following the further clarification received from Defra, BVA believes that the Defra proposals to improve humaneness and effectiveness and to ensure adequate independent oversight are sufficient to persuade us that BVA can support the continuation of the pilots using controlled shooting for a second year.

4. BVA has previously called for robust monitoring and collation of results, and independent analysis and auditing by a non-governmental body. We are pleased that following concerns raised by BVA, Defra now intends to appoint an independent auditor (in line with the Independent Expert Panel’s recommendations) to audit the way that protocols are carried out during the cull. Given that the IEP clearly set out how data should be monitored and recorded, we are satisfied that the appointment of an independent auditor does address many of our concerns, subject to seeing the detailed Terms of Reference. However, we continue to call upon the Secretary of State to put in place independent analysis in order to give confidence to the wider public.

5. We note that evidence from the Randomised Badger Culling Trial suggests that if culling in the pilot areas is stopped now there is a significant risk that this will lead to an increase in TB in cattle in those areas.

6. It remains our position that failure to tackle wildlife sources of infection has prolonged the presence of the disease in all affected species, and that humane, targeted and managed badger culling is an option to be used in carefully selected areas where badgers are regarded as a significant contributor to the persistent presence of bovine TB. We also believe that in the long term, vaccination of both badgers and cattle can
and should play an important role in any bovine TB eradication policy, and we fully support deployment of the existing injectable badger vaccine at the edge of endemic TB areas to mitigate the spread of the disease into low risk areas.

7. BVA recognises that Defra will want to see a significant improvement in humaneness and effectiveness in the second year of the pilots. BVA will make its own assessment of whether this has been achieved after the conclusion of the second year of the pilots before we could support either the further use or wider roll-out of culling using controlled shooting.

1 BVA’s policy on bovine tuberculosis can be found at http://www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policies/Policies/Farm-animals/Bovine-tuberculosis/