

**BVA Council position on the pilot badger culls
and badger culling policy in England**

1. BVA recognises that the continuing spread of bovine TB (bTB) within cattle and wildlife has an unacceptable impact on animal health and welfare, and has the potential to pose a risk to public health.
2. The control and eradication of bTB must be based on the application of sound scientific research and veterinary epidemiology. It is clear that no single measure can effectively tackle bTB, which is why BVA has supported a comprehensive eradication strategy using all available measures to tackle bTB in cattle and in the wildlife reservoir, including:
 - Surveillance and control of bTB in cattle (including testing, slaughter and movement restrictions)
 - Biosecurity measures
 - Control of bTB in the wildlife reservoir (using badger culling and/or badger vaccination in carefully selected areas)
 - Surveillance and control of bTB in non-bovines
 - Research and development (including of improved diagnostic tests, cattle vaccine, oral badger vaccine, and humane badger population control methodologies)
3. Failure to tackle wildlife sources of infection has prolonged the presence of the disease in all affected species. We continue to believe 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 bTB in cattle. We also believe that, in the long term, vaccination of both badgers and cattle can and should play an important role in any bTB eradication strategy. In the meantime we fully support deployment of the existing injectable badger vaccine at the edge of endemic bTB areas to mitigate the spread of the disease into low risk areas.
4. We note that the badger culling pilots were established to test the humaneness, effectiveness and safety of controlled shooting. The Randomised Badger Culling Trial had already established that government-led cage trapping and shooting can deliver a safe, effective and humane cull.
5. Evidence from the Randomised Badger Culling Trial indicates that culling needs to continue for at least four years in order to be confident of a net benefit in terms of a reduction in the incidence of TB in cattle in those areas.
6. Taking this into account, we have carefully considered the data from the first two years of badger culling in the pilot areas.
7. Relating to humaneness, the Independent Expert Panel assumed that a non-retrieved badger might have been hit. In the second year of badger culling in the pilot areas, although there was some improvement in the non-retrieval rate, this was not statistically significant.
8. On effectiveness of population removal in the second year of culling, based on the published data, it appears that the effectiveness target was reached in Somerset, but not in Gloucestershire.
9. At the end of year one, BVA called for ongoing independent analysis and we were very disappointed that Defra chose not to incorporate such analysis in year two of the pilots.
10. In light of the results following the second year of culling, BVA believes that it has not been demonstrated conclusively that controlled shooting can be carried out effectively and humanely based on the criteria that were set for the pilots. Nor are we confident that the

effectiveness and humaneness can be significantly further improved, despite Defra's assurances after the first year of culling. We therefore do not support the continued use of controlled shooting as part of the badger control policy.

11. BVA believes that culling in West Somerset and West Gloucestershire should be completed using cage trapping and shooting only, on the basis that this is a tried and tested methodology based on the evidence from the RBCT.
12. BVA also calls for the wider roll-out of culling using cage trapping and shooting only, to carefully selected areas where badgers are regarded as a significant contributor to the high incidence of bTB in cattle.

Agreed by BVA Council on 15 April 2015