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Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [Written Evidence](#)

Memorandum submitted by P Caruana (BTB 33)

My name is Paul Caruana and I work for the Defra Wildlife Unit (Polwhele) that is currently wrapping up the Krebs Trial. I have worked in the Unit for 12 years—five as a fields person, four as a Field Supervisor and the last three as a Field Manager (Higher Scientific Officer). I have been involved in the live testing regime of the early 1990s, the Badger Removal Operations of the mid 1990s and the current Krebs Trial since its inception. I feel that my experience as an ex-RAF Logistics Officer and as an individual that has had lots of "hands on" experience could be valuable to any balanced and rational debate affecting the future policy in handling the current TB epidemic.

To start with, I feel that I have enough anecdotal evidence, gathered over my 12 years, to have a good feel for what should have happened in the war against TB. Unfortunately, and as I know only too well, this type of evidence isn't usually acceptable, but here it comes anyway:

1. Badger removal operations worked well when the land being culled was made fully available, not just the area dictated to us by vets.
2. Where badgers were totally removed from a farm, that farm, after it had its infected cattle culled, often stayed clear of TB for up to 10 years.
3. We stayed on farms for up to three months to ensure that ALL badgers were caught—

unlike the Krebs eight days per year trapping regime.

4. You do not need large scale culling for it to be effective if the culling effort is robust from the start.

5. Krebs had too many anomalies and weaknesses in the strategy for it to be successful. It took us four years to steer away from trapping setts that had been interfered with by Animal Rights Activist, to being able to trap badgers anywhere in order to eliminate them. That is only one of a raft of operational problems we faced and had to endure.

6. Limited trapping—eight days per year with Krebs—has little effect if carried out late in the year—the effect being that areas went almost two years without an effective cull.

7. The costs for a future culling policy must NOT be based on Krebs costings. The Wildlife Unit have many great ideas on how to reduce costs vastly should the State remain involved in it. Give the Unit the chance to see how innovative it can be when it comes to reducing operating costs. Krebs was ridiculously expensive for what it delivered.

8. The Public and the NFU are demanding that "professionals" remain involved to ensure adequate training is given to those with the task to do, and to ensure that animal welfare and humaneness remains a number one priority. Overseeing the task will give some comfort to those who fear that this might not be the way.

9. Compulsory entry onto farms is a must when considering what Policy to adopt. Making farms who receive Government subsidies participate in one of its schemes must be made compulsory. Krebs has proven that wide scale non-cooperation does make it nigh on impossible to operate effectively.

10. The Krebs Reactive strategy was prematurely ended in my opinion. The results used also showed us that, in areas we had never operated in (areas J2 and H1 which had a very limited cull) also displayed the same increase in TB outside of the areas. That has to have another logical reason for the increase, as it clearly was not badger culling related. This point has yet to be satisfactorily answered.

11. The combined knowledge of the staff involved in all of the previous culling strategies has never been utilised or sought when putting together a Policy. Why can't the common sense approach ever be used when facing problems such as TB. We feel that we have the answers, if only somebody would listen to us. Details of the possible ways of operating are being submitted to the TB Consultation committee.

12. Be prepared to change a policy, to let it evolve, is a must. All strategies have seen staff restrained in what they would like to do, often flying in the face of common sense. Taking the risk— isn't that what it often needs to make things work properly? We have been shackled for too many years by rules and red tape—now is the time to be radical and make things change for the better.

I have probably said enough about the strategies I have participated/operated under. I know that my staff feel exactly the same way as I do on these matters. Scientists do not have all of the answers, and most certainly, Krebs doesn't. The Trial has far too many flaws in it to be trusted to produce meaningful evidence. I know what happened on the ground—the scientists only have the results we provided them with to work with. I know that those results could and should have been much better and useful than they currently are.

Nobody, and I mean nobody, working on the trial at the grass root level has ever believed that operating under the too strict and inflexible regime that Krebs put in place could work successfully. All the common sense answers to everyday

problems were too often ignored because "things had to be carried out scientifically" to mean anything. The whole basis of Krebs was to remove badgers off of the ground. For the first four years, that effort was farcical due to the restrictions placed upon us. Repeated requests to change operating methods were ignored. With that in mind, how much weight do we give to the latest ISG report, detailing their "robust" findings to the Minister? If it were down to me and my staff, very little.

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