



Wildlife Unit

Research studies have demonstrated that the culling of TB infected badgers leads to a significant reduction in the incidence of TB in the local cattle population. The Wildlife Administration Unit (WAU) in Johnstown Castle, Wexford was set up in late 2002, to provide administrative support facilities to the District Veterinary Office (DVO) veterinary and technical staff that are involved in this Dept. wildlife programme, which involves badger removals.

The current TB Eradication Scheme contains a significant wildlife strategy that is implemented under license from and in co-operation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Where an epidemiological investigation rules out other immediate causes as the source of TB infection and evidence of badger activity has been found on a holding, badgers may be captured under license granted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Under these arrangements licences are granted to each DVO to capture badgers in accordance with the terms of the 1976 Wildlife Act (as amended). The current strategy was introduced as part of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness in 2000 and, as such, is supported by the Partnership process.

The primary functions of the Wildlife Unit are:

1. Generate Survey maps and Capture Block orthophotography requested electronically from DVOs.
2. Manage a central database connected to 28 DVOs via Intranet
3. Process and deliver Capture Block worksheets to Field Staff
4. Process payments related to the operation of the Scheme i.e. Supplies, Post Mortems, Training, Transportation, Farm Relief Service (FRS) staff and Unsocial Hours Claims for TAOs/SAOs involved in the Scheme.

FRS and the Irish Equine Centre (IEC) are under contract with this Department to provide surveying/capturing and post mortem services for the Unit.

The Unit also has close links with the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA), which is located in UCD. The medium to long-term aim of the Wildlife programme is to provide a BCG vaccine for badgers against TB. Work to date in a controlled environment has shown promising results and a 3 year field trial of the orally delivered BCG vaccine will commence in Kilkenny in Autumn 2008. If the field trial is successful and subsequently a national badger vaccination programme is adopted the need to cull TB infected badgers will reduce as TB levels falls in both cattle and badgers.