

Monday, February 12, 2007

Update on relocation of badgers.

We have covered the relocation of badgers extensively on this site, beginning with several PQ's to Baby Ben Bradshaw to ascertain what, if any, criteria applied when such actions took place, but also describing the 'protocol' of Pauline Kidner at Secret World - as described by herself. See [August 2004 archive](#).

The answer to that was short and for hard pressed farmers with their cattle severely nailed to the floor, non too sweet. On Jan 6th 2004, Mr. Bradshaw replied to a question on any controls on the " movement of wild badgers for relocation", thus:

"...it is an offence to take, or attempt to take a badger from the wild, including for the purposes of relocation."

So far so good, except that our Ben also told us that of the cage traps set by Bourne's badger dispersal trial, 59 per cent were interfered with, and 12 percent went AWOL. Whether or not they were occupied at the time is not known.

Ben continued:

"As a native species, there are no specific restrictions under current law regulating where badgers are released once they have recovered. Normally, once fit to be returned to the wild, the badger will be returned to the location where it was originally found. This approach is recommended on welfare grounds due to their territorial nature, and also to avoid the risk of transmitting disease."There is a voluntary code of practise covering rehabilitation and release of badgers..."

However, on 12th Feb. 2004, Col 1560W, Ben confirmed that

"Animal hospitals treating sick or injured badgers are not legally required to test animals for bTB before they are released from captivity".

This is with a test known as the 'Brock' test, which although reasonably good - in fact very good - on a positive response, is awful on a negative, having a sensitivity of only 40.7 percent.

Ben goes on to confirm (18th March 2004, col 433W) that if a 'disabled' badger is taken into care, then there is no legal requirement to notify DEFRA or to keep any records whatsoever. And again on the 25th March " Animal hospitals treating sick and injured badgers are not legally required to test animals for bovine tuberculosis before they are released." A voluntary code of conduct applies, drawn up by the RSPCA, the Badger Groups and Secret World. Defra was not involved.

All this has come as bit of a shock to many. With an infectious disease endemic in the badger population (thank you Ben) and our cattle tested to distraction, why, may one ask is the release of badgers by various sanctuaries, individuals or well meaning organisations even contemplated?

Farmers Guardian covered this very well a week ago, (Feb 2nd issue) with Dr. John Gallagher describing the practise as 'folly', Prof. Tim Roper aghast with the comment "If government is contemplating culling large numbers of them, what on earth are we doing re-introducing them?" and Prof. Stephen Harris suggesting a rethink of the "protocol" - such as it is. Full story [here](#).