

Thursday, 22 May 2014

Glossop urges Wales to unite behind TB strategy

20 April 2012 | By [Alistair Driver](#)

WELSH Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop has urged farmers and badger campaigners to unite behind plans to tackle bovine TB (bTB) in Wales.

In an interview with *Farmers Guardian*, Dr Glossop revealed that the first phase of the Welsh Government's badger vaccination programme in the area is set to get underway soon.

Dr Glossop made it clear she had not changed her advice - which had previously underpinned the approach to tackling bTB adopted by former Welsh Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones - that badger culling can 'reduce the incidence of infection in the cattle population'. She also acknowledged that there is only 'limited evidence' of the benefits of badger vaccination in terms of reducing disease in cattle.

She said she 'completely understood the disappointment and confusion' felt by farmers following the decision, announced by Welsh Environment Minister John Griffiths on March 20, to opt for a five-year vaccination programme in the North Pembrokeshire Intensive Action Area, instead of a cull.

But she said: "This is what we have been asked to do, this is what the Minister is prepared to fund and support. This is our chance to find out if vaccinating badgers can make a difference so we must do it as well as we possibly can."

The Welsh Government has no legal powers to farmers to allow vaccination on their land. Dr Glossop said some farmers in the area had made it clear they no longer wanted to attend meetings or participate in the policy.

"I really need people to come on board now to work with me and with Government," she said.

She also urged those organisations – from small local groups to national organisations that opposed culling - to 'tell me what they are going to do to help us now we are vaccinating'.

She said Ministers had not been satisfied that the cull would pass the necessary legal tests laid out under the 1981 Animal Health Act.

But this week NFU Cymru deputy president Stephen James claimed the 'ridiculous decision' to rely on badger vaccination in Wales was based on politics, not scientific or legal considerations.

"It is a Labour Party decision taken because they know they would be culling badgers at the next election," he told an NFU council meeting, in Warwickshire, on Tuesday.

He said the union was still considering mounting a legal challenge against the decision and had until 60 days after the March 20 announcement to make up its mind.

Farmers in England are set to learn by today (Friday, April 20) whether a legal challenge brought by the Badger Trust against the decision to cull badgers in England this autumn will be permitted. If the judge gives the go ahead, the High Court hearing is likely to take place in June.

Readers' comments (20)

- Anonymous | 20 April 2012 2:13 pm

Will someone please explain to me why we persist with this stupidity,,, A vet wrote quoting an experiment carried out by DEFRA, A group of CLEAN badgers were caught & vaccinated at £17 a go, some weren't done some had a single dose some had 10 times the amount. After a period they were all dosed with bTB & what do you know they all wer infected at slaughter when disected. Even DEFRA says a vaccine is years down the line so why do we ponce about deluding ourselves its going to work.

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- Anonymous | 20 April 2012 4:22 pm

Badgers with 10 doses of vaccine? Absolute claptrap, Mr Anonymous. A vital part of a properly conducted vaccination programme is to identity-mark badgers already vaccinated, so even double or triple dosing can't happen. Properly conducted trials have also shown a very high degree of protection. Vaccination does work. It isn't the silver bullet. It has to be part of a campaign which involves farmers insisting on effective and regular testing and for herds with a recurring history of bTB to be the last port of call for any farmer wanting new stock. All the anti-badger bashing in the world won't hide the fact that time and time again disease is imported on to otherwise clean farms when cattle are bought from bTB hotspots.

- The Newt | 21 April 2012 6:44 am

The REAL science behind vaccinating badgers and cattle.

Around the world for all species the BCG vaccine is between 0 – 80% effective.

<http://www.scq.ubc.ca/tuberculosis-and-the-bcg-vaccine-not-quite-good-enough/>

Its effectiveness is dependant on factors such as age and location. So for example vaccinating adult buffalo in South Africa with BCG has failed totally to make any significant difference.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20684850>

The theory as to why this is, is that soon after birth mammals are exposed to other naturally occurring Mycobacterium species (that are relatively harmless) in the wild which cause an immune response, this then causes the body to be immune to the mild form (attenuated vaccine) of Mycobacterium bovis used in the BCG vaccine. They are immune to the vaccine, in short. However they are not immune to more virulent forms of M. bovis that cause bTB breakdown.

Obviously then to give the vaccine the optimum chance of working it must be given as soon after birth as possible. In newborn calves for example there is relatively good BCG take up at 60 - 70%. Even then a large percentage of newborn calves still go on to get full-blown bTB when exposed to M. bovis.

But how do you vaccinate newborn badgers in the wild when they spend the first six weeks of life underground?

Mycobacterium species inhabit soil; so clearly newborn badgers even in clean setts will be exposed to other Mycobacterium, which will inhibit their ability to take up the BCG.

Vaccinating wild infected badgers will not cure them, but will allow them to live longer and spread more TB during their lives. Vaccinating badgers does reduce their reaction to the disease but vaccinating wild badgers will not stop them becoming infected with the bacterium though.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21123260>

1 in 5 of all the people that die of infectious diseases world wide, die of TB. Bovine TB and human TB are not the same thing; they are in truth greater than 99% the same and are almost impossible to distinguish in effect and reaction and DNA, but studies in South America show that at least 2% of all TB is bovine TB. World wide 500,000 people will get MDR-TB (multi-drug resistant TB) this year some of these are bTB. To cure MDR-TB takes an intensive programme of isolation and drug and chemo therapy involving extreme body reactions and 12 drugs a day for up to 12 months of their lives.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20372087>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21197095>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19912616>

<http://blogs.msf.org/tb/about/>

Vaccinating wild badgers will result in bTB spreading and it will end up costing human lives and a great deal of misery to those infected. It is immoral to put the lives of sick badgers before that of our children.

- pat | 21 April 2012 8:33 pm

Anonymous @4.22

Quote: "Badgers with 10 doses of vaccine? Absolute claptrap.."

You misunderstand.

In the project to which this poster referred, pre screened (for TB) badgers were divided into two groups for

vaccination. One group had a 'normal' dose, the other a dose at 10 times that strength. At pm all badgers had lesions and all were shedding bacteria. One candidate of the extra strength BCG was so riddled with TB, he was euthanised ahead of time.

I think this is paper to which the poster referred:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/animals/diseases/tb/documents/4efficacy-ves 1-2.pdf>

- Hugh Jones | 22 April 2012 0:36 am

Even though I have no faith in BCG, politically this need to be tried and run its course if only to show how difficult it is to catch them ,not helped if the same ones get caught over and over again, it would make more sense to vaccinate in clean areas working in wards instead of in the middle of a hotspot.. Trouble is valuable time will again be lost as the bacteria marches North .

- The Newt | 22 April 2012 7:31 am

Hugh - I agree, the BCG should be used in clean areas around hotspots in my opinion, despite its weaknesses. It still offers some protection, just not complete protection.

As for proving that cage trapping does not work, the ISG has already proved that! Not using Krieb's methods!

There are only so many times we can keep repeating all these experiments. The truth is that we need a new vaccine. One that does work. Then vaccination might be a way forward, but not if it relies on cage trapping!

As things stand today, culling is the only way out of this spiral of infection and re-infection. Vaccination with BCG around the outside is an expensive luxury. It will end up costing far more than just money.

- The Newt | 22 April 2012 7:55 am

Sorry I appear to be contradicting myself. To make this clear; there is a huge difference between vaccinating healthy animals and sick ones.

As you can't tell easily which are which, we need to take a practical approach and vaccinate only animals in areas where cows are not reacting to the skin test.

In areas where cattle keep reacting, especially closed herds, culling the wild life reservoir is the only answer.

As for cooperating with animal rights organisations; we are making all the concessions and still they are not happy.

All they want is the total destruction of the livestock industry.

Allow these people onto your land and it would be like letting Al quaeda into a synagogue!

- Anonymous | 22 April 2012 10:52 am

A Non A Moose

I feel sorry for the WELSH Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop and her department, who has had her hands tied behind her back by the Labour Welsh Government. I will be lobbying a letter to ask the question - how many injections does every badger require? And who is going to be employed on the borders of England and Wales and ask the English badger for his passport - no vaccination no entry! I highly recommend the 4.1 million budget for the welsh language quangos is spent controlling TB.

- Charles Henry | 22 April 2012 1:36 pm

I'm ashamed of the advice given by Prof. Christianne Glossop. . Her video advocating culling badgers has now been removed from public viewing.

Even IF there was an effective BCG adapted vaccine for badgers, and even IF the said vaccine could be applied 100% across the country; which is PIE IN THE SKY; certainly at the present time. . And without

first testing each recipient it breaks all the veterinary rules in the book, and it would be years and years before it worked through and took effect even if was 100% successful! . By which time more and more mammals; pets, farmed, in zoos and in the wild will be infected by these insidious bacterium. . What's more; she must know that. . Until they find a 100% successful vaccine to replace the BCG, control of bTB will have to be by the proven method of population management of any self-maintaining host of this bacteria. . That is why we test and cull any reactor cattle.

You can see what we are all dealing with now Newt. . I just pray some of the BVA hierarchy very soon come out and blow the whistle on what's going on.

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- Charles Henry | 22 April 2012 2:10 pm

And now you all know why TB is at a 30year in this country, (the majority caused by M.tuberculosis not M.bovis)(yet), and why London is seen as the TB Capital of Europe. . We are apparently being governed by Neanderthals.

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