

## Parliamentary questions

24 July 2014


E-006041-14

Question for written answer  
to the Commission

Rule 130

Anja Hazekamp (GUE/NGL)

### ► Subject: Mass killing of badgers in the UK

 Answer(s)

Scientific research has shown that large-scale action against badgers is not capable of halting the spread of bovine tuberculosis<sup>(1)</sup>. The mass killing of badgers influences the surviving animals' behaviour so that the spread of bovine TB is encouraged by increased badger migration<sup>(2)</sup>. Nevertheless the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Natural England are proposing to kill more than 12 000 badgers. What is the Commission's opinion of this?

1. What measures does the Commission propose to take against the United Kingdom to halt these unnecessary, inhumane badger culls now that it is clear that the mass killing of badgers actually encourages the spread of bovine TB?
2. Is the senseless killing of animals not contrary to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which states that the Union and the Member States are to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, since animals are sentient beings?
3. Does the Commission agree that it is better to prevent the spread of zoonoses such as bovine TB by reducing the size of the cattle herd?

(1) <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v511/n7508/full/nature13529.html>

(2) <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/25/9193>

Original language of question: **NL**

Last updated: 5 August 2014

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## Parliamentary questions

11 September 2014

E-006041/2014

### Answer given by Mr Borg on behalf of the Commission

Bovine tuberculosis is a contagious disease transmissible to animals and to humans and is therefore submitted to compulsory eradication programmes in all Member States.

In some regions, bovine tuberculosis has also been detected in wildlife, as in badgers in the UK, which can then be involved in the maintenance of the disease in the environment and its spread to bovine herds.

There are no rules at EU level concerning the control of bovine tuberculosis in wildlife. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each Member State to adapt its bovine tuberculosis eradication strategy to take into account the specific epidemiological situation in wildlife present in its territory. Given the absence of specific EU legislation, the Commission cannot take measures in this regard.

Killing animals for disease control purposes, even in great number, is not in itself a breach of Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU if performed in such a way that animals are spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering.

Current EU legislation on bovine tuberculosis establishes a wide number of disease control measures to be applied in bovine herds. These measures do not include the diminution of the size of bovine herds as this is not considered an important risk factor.

Last updated: 11 September 2014

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