

The following is a copy of <http://www.warmwell.com/vetstbletter05.html#letter> taken on 29Oct2014

Open Letter 24 February 2005 from more than 350 vets and scientists (see below)

From The Times February 25, 2005:

Cull badgers to halt TB, say vets

An urgent cull of badgers in areas where bovine TB is rife is demanded today by 350 vets, including a government adviser on the disease. In a letter to Margaret Beckett, the Rural Affairs Secretary, the vets express their "despair over the present disastrous bovine TB situation and the wholly inadequate approach from your department in controlling the disease".

From the Daily Telegraph February 25, 2005:

"Despairing" vets call for badger cull to tackle TB

More than 350 vets and scientists have written "in despair" to Margaret Beckett the Environment Secretary, calling for a cull of badgers in areas where cattle herds have been hit by tuberculosis.

To the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
Westminster
London, SW1P 3JR
Open Letter 24 February 2005

Dear Mrs Beckett

THE CONTROL OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS – A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

We write in despair over the present disastrous bovine tuberculosis situation and the wholly inadequate approach taken by your Department in controlling the disease. There has been an 18% per annum rise in outbreaks since 1986, in which year only 88 outbreaks were recorded in the UK (DEFRA data). Following this trend, the likely outbreak total for 2004 will be around 3000. Thus DEFRA has allowed the statutory eradication of tuberculosis to go backwards alarmingly to fast approach the threshold of outbreaks during 1960 when our hard won National TB free status was achieved. If the present dire situation continues this status is likely to be lost in the near future.

You will be aware that the existence of a primary reservoir of tuberculosis in wild badgers has been known for over 30 years. MAFF took structured effective control of badgers in TB hotspot areas from 1975 until 1986. The rise in outbreaks then started when this was replaced by ineffective piecemeal control followed by no action at all outside trial areas after 1996. You have already been advised that the Krebs trial set up in selected areas in 1998 has been hopelessly compromised and that also it is a hugely expensive exercise which is most unlikely to yield any valid results. It is thus unacceptable to continue using this trial as an excuse for inaction. The recent publication of the more extensive and thorough Four Counties trial in Ireland gives further confirmation of the results of the several trials which had already been carried out in this country prior to the Krebs report.

We fully support the field veterinarians of the State Veterinary Service, who have been prevented from taking any control measures against the primary host of bovine tuberculosis in this country and yet are still expected to control tuberculosis in cattle.

You know that tuberculous badgers suffer a prolonged and wretched death and that a quarter of over 5000 badgers tested by MAFF during 1996 to 1998 were infected (DEFRA latest figures available).

For the foregoing reasons, we the undersigned members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, therefore exhort you to ensure that DEFRA takes positive steps to properly address the control of tuberculosis in the cattle herds of this country, which of necessity, will need to involve strategic culling of infected badgers.

Yours sincerely

Dr J. Gallagher, retd. VLA (ex SVIO Devon and Cornwall, TB Adviser, Veterinary Research Divn., DEFRA)

R. H. Muirhead MBE, Retd. SVS, (ex Lead TB VO, Gloucester)

Dr L. H. Thomas, Retd. IAH, Compton, Berkshire (ex Research Pathologist)

J.M.Daykin, Practice, Lewes, East Sussex

Dr A. McDiarmid FRSE, Retd. IAH, Compton, Berkshire (ex Wildlife Diseases Research Pathologist)

Professor W.R.Allen CBE, University of Cambridge (Professor of Equine Reproduction)

Dr H. Fraser, Neuropathogenesis Unit, Edinburgh (Research Neuropathologist)

Co signed by 345 other members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons