

There are alternatives to badger culling but...

updated 01 December 2014 by www.bovinetb.info

There are indeed other ways to help control bovine TB and these include better cattle control measures, badger vaccination and cattle vaccination.

Cattle control measures

Regarding cattle control measures the following lists what is being done in the Intensive Action Area of Wales. This programme started on 1st May 2010 so the project is now in its fifth year.

1. Testing cattle herds every six months.
2. Restricting cattle movements within and outside the area. All Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOA) in the area have been cancelled.
3. All British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) linkages between premises inside and outside the area, have been cancelled, requiring farmers to report all movements to BCMS and to comply with pre-movement testing requirements when moving cattle into and out of the IAA.
4. All breakdowns, whether or not "confirmed" on post-mortem examination, will require a clear test, 60 days after a positive test, followed by a further clear test after a further 60 days, before Official TB Free Status is regained and movement restrictions removed.
5. Allocation of holding numbers (CPH) & sub location numbers.
6. All breakdowns will be traced by Animal Health.
7. Greater use of gamma interferon assessed on an individual basis.

Perhaps all those anti-cull campaigners can tell everyone how TB in cattle in the IAA has reduced over these 5 years compared to the rest of Wales?

Badger vaccination

Regarding badger vaccination, the following paper published in Dec 2012 reported in Table S5 that after 4 yrs of vaccinating badgers on a group by group basis in Glouc, TB in badgers had only reduced from 36.8 to 33.8%.

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0049833>

Cattle vaccination

Regarding cattle vaccination, the following report authored by Lord Zuckerman O.M. MA, MD, DSc, FRCP, FRS President of The Zoological Society of London and The Fauna Preservation Society said that field trials in the UK in the 1940's and 50's found that BCG vaccination of cattle was neither practical nor effective.

<http://www.bovinetb.info/docs/zuckerman.pdf>

Badger culling

Question: In light of

- (a) the 12% anticipated reduction in TB over 9 years based on the PARTIAL cull carried out in the RBCT and
- (b) the substantial reduction in TB which has lasted for in excess of 25 years from the THOROUGH cull carried out at Thornbury (see <http://www.bovinetb.info/gassing.php#thornbury>),

what is the most effective thing the UK can do to reduce bovine TB?

Answer: Concentrate on the most effective way of reducing the badger vector by thorough culling in areas where disease levels are highest.

SURELY THIS IS NOT DIFFICULT TO SEE!!

Political pressure

The EU is now significantly contributing to the funding of bovine TB control in the UK and is rapidly losing patience with the UK. In fact in 2012 it issued a report which said the following

UK politicians must accept their responsibility to their own farmers and taxpayers as well as to the rest of the EU and commit to a long-term strategy that is not dependent on elections.

DEFRA's failure

So what is DEFRA doing? Ploughing the bulk of its research and development budget for addressing the badger vector into vaccination and completely avoiding putting any funds into programmes to look at effective culling technologies. As of 24th June 2013 there was not one programme in place which was looking at alternative culling methods.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210560/EIR_5525.pdf

The current approved budget for work on alternative culling methods was reported to be a punitive £61,397 since August 2013 according to

<http://www.bovinetb.info/docs/gassing-trials.pdf>

New Zealand

Culling badgers is the number one challenge to getting TB down and yet DEFRA has loaded all the responsibility for culling onto farmers who have other commitments and neither have the resource nor the time to manage and oversee the job properly. This is why New Zealand appointed a dedicated, accountable and salaried management team to overlook progress and did not see any progress until they did so. England has adopted the New Zealand failed model.

<http://www.tbfree.org.nz/interview-with-paul-livingstone.aspx>

Future prospects and what needs to be done

Unless badger protection legislation is changed to match that in the rest of Europe, England will never get close to where it was in the 80's, until DEFRA

- (a) takes the first steps in setting up a workable framework,
- (b) loads costs onto farmers so that paymasters are no longer hamstrung with the need to please an electorate, and
- (c) puts some effort into developing the ability to cull.