

Badger Culling Not a Cost Effective Means of Protecting Cattle

by [David DeFranza](#) on 02.10.10



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Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) is the scourge of cattle farmers in the United Kingdom—costing an average of £27,000 per infected herd. Slowing bTB's spread is one of the major techniques farmers and the government use to fight the disease. The culling of carrier species—specifically badgers—has been part of this defense for generations.

New research, however, has shown that badger culls are not an effective means of controlling bTB, a finding that calls into question the entire management strategy for the disease.

Culling is a controversial proposal **around the world**, and badger culls in the UK are no different. Currently, the government of Wales is considering legislation to establish a cull even as it faces a suit that would prohibit it. The question, then, is whether culls result in a large enough decrease in bTB to be worthwhile.

A large-scale field trial was initiated in 1998 to study the impact of badger culls. It found that initially, the cull did result in reduced numbers of bTB but within four years of the final cull, incidences had returned to normal. Professor Christl Donnelly, senior author of the study, [commented](#):

The savings that farmers and the government would make by reducing bTB infections in cattle are two or three times less than the cost of repeated badger culls as undertaken in the trial, so this is not a cost-effective contribution to preventing bTB infections in cattle.

Early analysis showed that, while bTB incidences decreased within the cull zones, it increased outside, offsetting the immediate benefit. In addition, the study found that while culling in a 150 kilometer zone saved and estimated £610,200, the program cost the government between £1.35 million and £2.14 million.

The results make it clear that killing badgers is not a viable solution to Britain's bTB problems.

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pburns 2 hours ago

Actually, what it shows is that badger culling needs to be done under license as a form of legal hunting and as a revenue maker. In the U.S. we do not pay the Government to shoot our deer, geese, ducks, etc. We pay a licensing fee, do it in a season, with limits, and in designated hunting zones. The result: animals are managed at no cost to the state and considerable revenue is returned which is invested in land conservation. Perfect all the way around. The failure of the U.K. to implement a logical and science-based wildlife management system is a massive FAIL on the part of an otherwise great country.

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