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Policy paper

Summary of badger vaccination in 2021

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Applies to England



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Background

The government's strategy^{[\[footnote 1\]](#)} on tackling bovine tuberculosis in England includes badger vaccination.

As the licensing authority, Natural England grants licences under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 to take and mark badgers to enable vaccination to prevent the spread of bovine tuberculosis in cattle.

Licence holders must have the permission of the landholder where they propose to vaccinate badgers. Before individuals can set cage-traps or vaccinate badgers, they must also prove to Natural England that they have completed the relevant training^{[\[footnote 2\]](#)}.

Number of badgers vaccinated in England in 2021

The open season for vaccinating badgers runs each year from 1 May to 30 November.

Licence holders must submit to Natural England an annual return of the number of badgers vaccinated during the open season.

In 2021, licence holders vaccinated 1575 ^{[\[footnote 3\]](#)} badgers across England.

County	Licenced area (km ²)	Badgers vaccinated
Avon	5.61	70
Berkshire	12.08	18
Cheshire	45.66	232
Cornwall	39.70	188
Derbyshire	61.75	244

County	Licenced area (km2)	Badgers vaccinated
Devon	12.26	52
Dorset	13.19	34
East Sussex	30.77	78
Gloucestershire	24.36	215
Greater Manchester	0.52	5
Hampshire	1.69	0
Hereford And Worcester	0.45	2
Leicestershire	0.91	9
Nottinghamshire	0.54	12
Oxfordshire	19.59	85
Shropshire	8.97	54
Somerset	14.89	89
Staffordshire	9.21	9
Warwickshire	1.32	20
Wiltshire	31.05	48

Vaccination of badgers in Cumbria

Badgers vaccinated in Cumbria are part of a badger control intervention area, which has been granted a Low Risk Area Badger Disease Control licence. Vaccination was undertaken over a total area of 140.4km², of which 91.04km² was accessible.

County	Total area (km ²)	Licensed accessible area (km ²)	Badgers vaccinated
Cumbria	140.4	91.04	111

Field monitoring

Cage-trapping is a long established method of catching badgers and the welfare of badgers captured in cage-traps has been investigated before^[footnote 4].

In 2021, Natural England conducted compliance monitoring visits on 8 (4.5 %^[footnote 5]) individuals authorised to cage-trap and vaccinate badgers. All individuals were compliant with licence conditions.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england> (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england>)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-badger-vaccination-training> (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-badger-vaccination-training>)
3. Based on a preliminary analysis of the return forms submitted to Natural England in December 2021.
4. Woodroffe, R, Bourne, FJ, Cox, DR, Donnelly, CA, Gettinby, G, McInerney, JP, and Morrison, WI (2005) 'Welfare of badgers (*Meles meles*) subjected to culling: patterns of trap-related injury', *Animal Welfare*, 14 (1), pp. 11-17.
5. Based on the number of compliance visits conducted as a proportion of the total number of licensed individuals

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