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Policy paper

# Summary of badger vaccination in 2023

Updated 1 May 2024

**Applies to England**

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# Background

The [government's strategy on tackling bovine tuberculosis in England](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>) includes badger vaccination.

Badgers are a protected species. This means a licence is required to capture them in cage traps before they are vaccinated. A licence is also needed to temporarily mark a badger to show it has been vaccinated. In 2023, these licences were issued by Defra and Natural England.

Individuals must have explicit permission from the relevant landowner to access land they want to place traps on. Individuals must provide proof of [relevant training](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-badger-vaccination-training) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-badger-vaccination-training>) when they register for a licence to set cage-traps and/or mark badgers.

## Number of badgers vaccinated in England in 2023

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

Licensed individuals must submit to Defra and Natural England an annual return of the number of badgers trapped, marked and vaccinated during the open season. In 2023, licensed individuals vaccinated 3064 [\[footnote 1\]](#) badgers across England.

County	Badgers vaccinated	Of which by APHA
Avon	59	8
Berkshire	8	0
Cheshire	128	0
Cornwall	538	375

<b>County</b>	<b>Badgers vaccinated</b>	<b>Of which by APHA</b>
<b>Cumbria</b>	200	169
<b>Derbyshire</b>	88	0
<b>Devon</b>	51	0
<b>Dorset</b>	36	15
<b>East Sussex</b>	634	0
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	514	413
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	21	0
<b>Herefordshire</b>	46	46
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	85	0
<b>Shropshire</b>	31	0
<b>Somerset</b>	236	178
<b>Staffordshire</b>	4	0
<b>Surrey</b>	3	0
<b>Warwickshire</b>	21	0
<b>Wiltshire</b>	290	265
<b>Worcestershire</b>	71	71
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,064</b>	<b>1,540</b>

## **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 140.4km<sup>2</sup>, of which 91.04km<sup>2</sup> was accessible.

<b>County</b>	<b>Total area (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Licensed accessible area (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Badgers vaccinated</b>
<b>Cumbria</b>	214.3	141.3	169

## Field monitoring

Cage-trapping is a long established method of catching badgers and the welfare of badgers captured in cage-traps has been investigated previously [\[footnote 2\]](#).

In 2023, Natural England conducted compliance monitoring visits on 28 (15% [\[footnote 3\]](#)) licensed individuals authorised to cage-trap, mark and vaccinate badgers. All individuals were compliant with licence conditions.

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1. Based on a preliminary analysis of the return forms submitted to Defra in December 2023. This may change subject to detailed review of the data.
  2. 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.
  3. Based on the number of compliance visits conducted as a proportion of the total number of licensed individuals

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