Is the Welsh Government committed to eradicating bovine TB?
This Government has a commitment to deliver a science-led approach to bovine TB eradication.

What are you doing to tackle bovine TB?
We have a comprehensive bovine TB eradication programme in place across Wales which tackles all sources of infection. This includes annual TB testing of cattle, removal and slaughter of reactors, (animals that react to the TB skin test) and Pre Movement Testing of cattle. Additional measures including six monthly testing of cattle and the provision of free biosecurity advice to farmers are in place in the Intensive Action Area (IAA).

What is the IAA?
The IAA is a bovine TB endemic area. It was established as an area within which additional measures could be implemented to tackle all sources of bovine TB, in both domestic and wild animal species. The need for these measures has not changed.

Why have you chosen this area?
This area of West Wales has the highest incidence of bovine TB in Wales. On 1st May 2011 23% of herds in the IAA were under restriction due to a TB incident. This compares with an average of 8% in herds in comparison areas.

How long will it take to eradicate bovine TB in Wales?
Eradicating bovine TB in Wales is a long term goal. Whilst an exact timescale for eradication is impossible to predict, it is likely that it could take some 20 years for Wales to be recognised as being 'Officially TB free'.

What was the Science Review?
The Science Review was commissioned by the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, John Griffiths, to look at the scientific evidence base underpinning our comprehensive programme for bovine TB eradication in Wales. This was a response to a Programme for Government commitment.

Professor Chris Gaskell chaired the Science Review at the request of the Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor John Harries. The Review panel was provided with all of the evidence associated with the TB Eradication Programme to date. Experts were called to give additional evidence, including the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales.

The Science Review report presents a useful summary of evidence underpinning the bovine TB eradication programme so far.

Did the review support the TB Eradication programme?
The Review confirmed the value of the comprehensive approach to TB eradication being pursued by the Welsh Government. It is published on the Welsh Government website for all to view at: www.wales.gov.uk/bovinetb

Why has it taken so long to take this decision?
There was no delay in receiving the Science Review Report but the complex nature of the TB situation in Wales required detailed consideration. The report was considered along with a range of scientific and legal advice before a decision was reached.

What is the basis for the Minister's decision?
In making this decision, the Minister has considered the likely benefits that culling or vaccination could have. Any decision to cull badgers would need to be justified on the basis that it would be necessary to eliminate or substantially reduce the incidence of bovine TB in cattle. In determining this matter the Minister considered the evidence provided to him, including scientific and legal advice. He has note noted the advice on the potential benefits that might be obtained from vaccination or culling of badgers. His conclusion is that he is not at present satisfied that a cull of badgers would be necessary to bring about a substantial reduction in the incidence of bovine TB in cattle in which case he cannot authorise a cull under the Animal Health Act 1981

The decision of the previous Minister was science based what is different now?
This Government has a commitment to deliver a science-led approach to evaluate and review the best way of tackling bovine TB. This decision has been based on careful and detailed consideration of the most up to date evidence as reported by the Science Review and Welsh Government officials.

There have been a number of changes in the evidence base recently, including the conclusions of the Science review, which officials provided in their recent advice to the Minister.

You have always said that vaccination would not work in an endemic area. Has that changed?
There is an effective vaccine for badgers available and a method of delivery of vaccine which can be scaled up for the IAA.

Vaccination of badgers should make some of them less important in the transfer of bovine TB between badgers and cattle and between badgers.

As concluded by the Science Review, repeated vaccination is likely to result in a gradual build up of immunity in the badger population thus reducing the risk to local cattle from badger-to-cattle transmission in the medium to long term.

It is also envisaged that vaccinating badgers in high incidence areas should provide valuable evidence to demonstrate an impact. Demonstrating any effect in low disease incidence areas would be difficult.

No trials have been undertaken to assess whether the vaccination of badgers would reduce the number of bovine TB cattle herd breakdowns. However, the

Science Review stated that ‘it is logical to assume that over time this would be the case’.

What happens next?
Vaccination is expected to begin in the Intensive Action Area during summer 2012 and to be repeated annually in the area for 5 years. It will take place alongside additional cattle measures and biosecurity visits implemented in the IAA in 2010. The Welsh Government will contact landowners directly nearer this time with additional information and arrangements.

In addition, the Minister has asked the Chief Veterinary Officer to consider other geographical areas where vaccination could also be expected to contribute to TB eradication. The intention is that vaccination is developed to ensure that its potential effect can be monitored with a view to ensure that the Government continues to take a science led approach towards the TB Eradication Programme in Wales.

Who will undertake the vaccination?
Vaccination will be undertaken by trained specialists on behalf of the Welsh Government.

How will vaccine be administered?
It is expected that badgers will need to be cage trapped at night and injected as early as possible the next morning, intramuscularly, with the badger BCG vaccine. They will then be released.

What happens if a trapped badger is injured or clearly infected with TB?
All badgers trapped will be assessed prior to release and, provided they are not injured to an extent that would make release inhumane, will be released as quickly as possible. If any badgers exhibit signs of injury or illness, veterinary assistance will be sought.

What happens if non-target species are trapped?
Protocols have been developed to reduce the likelihood of capturing non-target species. Appropriate training will be given to personnel and the guidance and training has been developed with the assistance of experts. All non-target species will be assessed prior to release (exceptions do apply to non-native species as detailed below). If any exhibit signs of injury, veterinary assistance will be sought.

What happens if non-native species are trapped?
Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits the release of certain non-native species. In the event of a grey squirrel, mink or muntjac deer being inadvertently caught in a trap, as non-native species, they will be dispatched. This will be done according to the methods set out in the standard operating procedures.

Will there be a closed-season for vaccination?
The duration and timing of badger vaccination needs to balance the welfare requirements for badger intervention against the disease control

requirements. It is important that lactating mothers are not held overnight in traps, depriving young badgers of their food source. Prior to vaccination, a closed season for badger vaccination will be agreed to reflect the environmental conditions and evidence available at that time.

How much do you expect to reduce TB in Cattle?
It is difficult to predict exact figures for the reduction in herd TB incidence that we would like to see but repeated vaccination is likely to result in a gradual build up of immunity in the badger population thus reducing the risk to local cattle from badger-to-cattle transmission in the medium to long term.

Will goats and/or camelids be tested in the IAA area this year?
Yes. During 2012, all known goat and camelid herds in the IAA will receive a one-off test to assess the level of disease within their populations. Future surveillance policy of these species within the IAA will depend on these test results. Goat keepers will also be offered a biosecurity visit.

Will you be looking at wild deer in the area?
While humans and other animals can catch bovine TB, some species are particularly susceptible. As well as cattle and badgers, we know that this includes goats, camelids and some types of deer.

We will be looking at all sources of infection, and will continue to assess the risk from wild deer in the area.

How can I get more information?
Visit www.wales.gov.uk/bovinetb to keep up to date with news. Livestock owners will also receive regular information in Gwlad, the Welsh Government's bi monthly Rural Affairs Magazine.