



Somerset
Wildlife Trust



Somerset Wildlife Trust Position Statement

Bovine TB and badger culling

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Introduction

Somerset Wildlife Trust does not allow badger culling on its land.

Somerset Wildlife Trust is committed to protecting wildlife in the county by making decisions based on scientific evidence to inform our approach to land management. Based on the scientific evidence available we do not believe that culling a protected species is the right approach to tackling bovine TB.

Evidence shows that badgers are not the primary cause of spreading bTB in cattle, and there is robust evidence that culling badgers will in fact make the problem worse due to the perturbation effect (the increase in movement of badgers as defended territories are broken down, which allows them to move more freely and potentially spread infection.)

Read more about the impacts of culling [here](#).

Read the science behind our position [here](#).

We support scientific non-lethal methods for tackling bovine TB

We support all non-lethal, scientifically based measures for tackling bovine TB in cattle and wildlife. The issue of bTB requires a range of responses including better bovine TB testing for cattle (current testing is inaccurate – up to 1 in 5 infected cows are mistakenly cleared as TB-free and returned to the herd, thus potentially infecting further animals), research and trials into a usable vaccine for cattle (already vaccinated for 16 other diseases), significantly improved biosecurity on farms and more effective movement controls for cattle. These are all things that Somerset Wildlife Trust - and the wider Wildlife Trust movement - are urgently calling on the government to action.

If the conditions are suitable, badger vaccination can be an effective measure in reducing the development and progression of the disease and reduces the spread of disease within badger populations, as vaccinated badgers are much less likely to become infected with bTB. As concluded by Dr Rosie Woodroffe, there need to be large scale trials of vaccination programmes in areas not affected by the cull to determine the effectiveness of badger vaccination on tackling bovine TB.

Somerset Wildlife Trust are working with the Somerset Badger Group to identify opportunities where we think we can have an impact in terms of reducing the chances of bTB occurring by vaccinating badger populations as a preventative measure. Bovine TB is passed from cattle to badger and vice versa, so reducing the prevalence of bTB in badgers we reduce the potential of cattle infection.

We are at the start of the process, but hope that any action taken will prove to be a helpful contribution towards helping eradicate bTB as we await further action (and funding) by the government to support all other means of prevention.

Somerset Badger Group are the experts on vaccinations, hence why we are partnering with them to deliver any vaccination activity. There is a lot of information on their website about their work. <https://www.somersetbadgers.org.uk/>

For further detail please email vaccinations@somersetbadgers.co.uk

Working with landowners to find solutions

We do understand the devastation an outbreak of bovine Tb can be for farmers and rural communities. Somerset's farmers are crucial allies in our work to conserve a wide range of threatened species.

Staff and volunteers at Somerset Wildlife Trust work every day with people who are affected by bTB and witness first-hand the devastating impacts this disease has on farming communities. We are also a landowner that relies on healthy livestock for conservation grazing to protect and restore threatened wildlife on many of our reserves.

What do we want our government to do?

We call on the government to end the badger cull and focus all efforts on trialling, investing in and licensing injectable cattle vaccine, supporting farmers to achieve better biosecurity on farms, effective cattle movement controls and improved TB testing. We believe a coordinated, sustained programme of badger vaccination would make a significant and viable contribution towards any bTB eradication strategy by reducing transmission between wildlife and cattle. We call on the government to invest in such large-scale vaccination programmes.

How can better solutions be found?

We believe that one of the most negative impacts of the government's current policy of badger culling is the way it has polarised the issue of bovine TB in the countryside. In order to find a solution to a disease that infects both farmed animals and wildlife, it is essential that farmers and landowners can work together with animal health, welfare and conservation organisations. The ongoing badger culls make this positive approach less likely to occur. Somerset Wildlife Trust is firmly opposed to any action taken by members of the public which has the effect of intimidating farmers, landowners and their families.

For more information and updates, visit our bovine TB webpage [here](#).
