

Badger damage to crops is "of little economic consequence", reminds Badger Trust

The Badger Trust today flatly rejected claims in a new report that "reducing badger damage to crops is a priority" [1].

The claim is made by researchers from the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, using data from a report [2] published by researchers for the badger-hostile Ministry of Agriculture in 1999.

Using the 1999 report as evidence, Oxford's researchers claim that badgers "make a significant contribution to farmers' losses of cereals such as wheat, barley, oats, and maize". They then go on to recommend that a "full-scale field trial" of aversion therapy to discourage badgers from eating cereals "would be worthwhile". This trial would extend a project which the University's researchers have recently concluded.

David Williams, chairman of the Badger Trust, commented: "Unfortunately, whatever the authors' intention, the damage caused by badgers appears to have been exaggerated.

"The 1999 report actually concluded that badger damage to crops 'was of little economic consequence to individual land owners/occupiers', which is precisely why this long ago stopped being a research priority for the Government.

"Moreover, the Central Science Laboratory has shown that a low cost, six volt electric fence will keep badgers out of crops. So, even for the handful of cases where badger damage might verge on the significant, a solution already exists.

ENDS

1. MacDonald, D. and Burnham, Dawn (2008), The State of Britain's Mammals 2008, People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.
2. Moore, N. et al. (1999) Survey of badger, *Meles meles*, damage to agriculture in England and Wales. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 36, 974-988.
3. Poole, D.W. and I.G. McKillop, Comparison of the effectiveness of two types of electric fences to exclude badgers. *Crop Protection*, 1999. 18(1): p. 61-66.
4. Poole, D.W., G. Western, and I.G. McKillop, The effects of fence voltage and the type of conducting wire on the efficacy of an electric fence to exclude badgers (*Meles meles*). *Crop Protection*, 2003. 23(1): p. 27-33.

Badger Trust is the only charity solely dedicated to the conservation of badgers across Great Britain.

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