

Badger Trust condemns "brutal" and "abhorrent" decision to kill badgers in Wales

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Badger Trust Cymru today described the decision to kill badgers in Wales to control bovine TB as the start of a "brutal pogrom", following an announcement by Elin Jones, Minister for Rural Affairs [1]. The Badger Trust for the UK as a whole said it was an "abhorrent decision".

Steve Clark, spokesman for Badger Trust Cymru, commented: "This decision marks the start of a brutal pogrom against badgers.

"Elin Jones has ignored the weight of scientific opinion [2] and caved in to bullying farming unions and cull-mad vets.

"By combining badger culling with other TB control measures, Elin Jones will have no idea which particular measure reduces the disease.

"But any resulting fall in bovine TB will inevitably be attributed to badger culling, spelling doom for badgers across both Wales and the UK as pressure mounts to repeat this brutal extermination elsewhere."

David Williams, chairman of the Badger Trust for the UK as a whole, commented:

"To slaughter badgers in Wales when, in England, trials of a vaccine for badgers are about to get underway [3], is a truly abhorrent decision.

"The evidence is clear that cattle spread bovine TB, with recent reports from the National Audit Offices in both England and Northern

Ireland confirming that bovine TB testing is inadequately enforced and delivered [4,5].

"These problems also exist in Wales, but rather than putting farming in order, Elin Jones has decided to make a scapegoat of badgers instead.

This is cheap, nasty politics of the very worst kind."

The Badger Trust has vowed to examine the decision in detail and consult with its legal advisors over whether it can be subject to a Judicial Review. Mr Williams added: "We will look at every legal means possible to stop this cull going ahead."

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For further comment in Wales contact:

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Notes to editors:

1. For details of Elin Jones' announcement, see

<http://wales.gov.uk/news/topic/environment/2009/?lang=en>

2. In 2007, the Independent Scientific Group completed the largest ever field trial on badger culling for bovine TB control and concluded that it could "make no meaningful difference" to the disease.

Instead, it recommended better TB testing for cattle and the restrictions of cattle movement around the UK. See: Bourne, F.J., et al., Bovine TB: The Scientific Evidence. Independent Scientific Group Reports, 2007. Final Report.

3. A field trial for an injectable badger vaccine will get underway in 2010, following an announcement by Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 19 March 2009. See: Benn announces deployment of injectable badger vaccine, Defra Press Release, 19 March 2009.

4. On 18 March 2009, The Northern Ireland Audit Office (<http://tinyurl.com/d9ktb4>) reported that measures to reduce the spread of bovine TB between herds were inadequate, with a lack of fencing between farms, little training by farmers in biosecurity, a lack of pre-movement testing for cattle, poor compliance with EU legislation and problems with fraud.

5. On 4 March 2009, the National Audit Office (<http://tinyurl.com/byllqz>) reported that: "The effectiveness of the routine testing regime for Bovine Tuberculosis is undermined by the weakness of existing enforcement arrangements."

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

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