

Friday 6th August

Subject: CONFUSION IN WALES AS CATTLE TB RATES DROP

For Immediate Release

Only half as many cattle were slaughtered in Dyfed because of bovine TB in the first four months of this year than in the same period last year [1] with no badgers killed. This is the county where up to 1,500 badgers were under threat of extermination until the Appeal Court quashed the plan in June. The number of herds infected in Dyfed also fell by a healthy 14 percent between the same periods [2].

Although these Defra figures are provisional and subject to revision the reductions were far from marginal. They were in line with longer-term statistics showing a consistent downward trend of about seven percent over the last two and a half years both in Wales and Great Britain as a whole.

The stringent controls in Wales on the movement and sale of live cattle are designed to achieve results such as those above. The Trust says they should also be implemented across England and without the wasteful distraction of killing badgers. Elsewhere, Scotland has now been given TB-free status by the EU, and Northern Ireland has announced it has no plans to kill badgers.

Despite bovine tuberculosis figures continuing to fall without any badgers being killed, not just in Wales but in Great Britain overall, the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) makes new claims that culling could be effective. The Badger Trust says the FUW should be wholeheartedly encouraging its members to back cattle-based measures in the light of the improving figures. The FUW has now asserted (in a statement it did not see fit to have independently validated [3]) an assumed drop in bTB of 30 percent if badgers were killed for over five years in North Pembrokeshire and 32 percent for a further two and a half years. But even the Welsh Assembly Government has calculated only a supposed nine percent reduction in bTB.

The Court of Appeal recently found that a nine percent reduction would not be sufficiently "substantial" under the Animal Health Act to justify killing wildlife, but the Trust emphasises that the court did not establish a threshold for an expected "substantial reduction" in disease as would be required under the Animal Health Act. In any case, the diminishing level of bTB over the last two and a half years with no badgers killed confirms the pointlessness of culling [4].

Ends

NOTES:

[1] 3,313 down to 1,752; a drop of 47 percent (Defra)

[2] From 87 to 75.

[3]

http://www.fuw.org.uk/tl_files/FUW/article_images/PolicyDepartmentPapers/FinalRBCTAnalysis19thJuly2010%20.pdf (Independent validation involves the process of peer review and subsequent publication in a recognised scientific journal).

[4] In Great Britain as a whole the fall in confirmed new herd incidents (CNIs) was six percent (2,633 to 2,468) in the two years from January 2008. In Wales, the drop was five percent (from 541 to 513) over the same period. In the first four months of this year cases in Great Britain fell by another eight percent (from 1047 to 964).

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