



Care for the Wild International

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Elin Jones AM
Minister for Rural Affairs
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

18/2/2010

Dear Ms Jones,

Re: Badger culling in Pembrokeshire

Many thanks for your response of 26th January 2010, to my letter of 5th January expressing our concerns about your proposals to commence culling badgers in Wales as part of a strategy to control bovine TB in cattle.

In response to your claim that you have not “ignored scientific advice” in formulating your plans, I would like to bring your attention to the recent publication by scientists from Imperial College and the Institute of Zoology, London, published in the journal PlosOne on 10/2/2010¹.

As a result of their analyses of the duration of the impacts of badger culling carried out during the 10 year Randomised Badger Culling Trial which was completed in 2007, the authors concluded that “reductions in cattle TB incidence achieved by repeated badger culling were not sustained in the long term after culling ended”, and that “badger culling is unlikely to contribute effectively to the control of cattle TB in Britain”.

Additionally, the authors concluded that any savings made through reductions in cattle TB that may have resulted from culling badgers “did not offset the financial costs of culling”. Indeed, the costs of culling badgers within an idealised area were calculated to be 2-3.5x any savings achieved through reduced TB rates in cattle. These findings need to be given due consideration with regard to your concerns about the cost of bovine TB to the taxpayer.

I would like to challenge your assertion that “...carrying out a badger cull alongside strict cattle controls, has not been tried before in the UK...”. The Randomised Badger Culling Trial which took place over a 10 year period ending in 2007, is widely regarded as the largest epidemiological field study ever undertaken to investigate the impact of a disease affecting wildlife. Your statement suggests that during these extensive trials, strict cattle controls were not in place. I am certain that DEFRA would refute such allegations.

I would also like to challenge your comparison of the situation in the UK with that in New Zealand. Brush tailed possums are an introduced species to New Zealand, are considered a pest species, and are therefore not protected under indigenous wildlife protection legislation. Badgers, on the other hand, are an indigenous UK species that receive protection under our

wildlife legislation and through our obligations to the EU's Habitats Directive. Comparisons of control methods for the two species are therefore inappropriate.

Scientists agree that limited culling of badgers is unlikely to achieve significant long-term reductions in cattle TB in the UK, and that the cost of culling badgers significantly outweighs any savings that might result from short-term reductions in TB in cattle. I am sure you agree that very wide scale culling of badgers to eliminate populations over wide areas would be unacceptable.

In the light of these considerations, I would urge that you reconsider your decision to implement limited badger culling, and instead concentrate your efforts on stricter controls of cattle movements, and consideration of more innovative and less destructive methods of controlling the disease in badgers, such as vaccination.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Jones', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Mark Jones BVSc MSc (Stir) MSc (UL) MRCVS

Programmes and Fundraising Director

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¹Jenkins HE, Woodroffe R, Donnelly CA (2010) The Duration of the Effects of Repeated Widespread Badger Culling on Cattle Tuberculosis Following the Cessation of Culling. PLoS ONE 5(2): e9090. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0009090