

# Monitoring the humaneness and effectiveness of badger culling in 2014

## 1. Background:

Defra published its [response to the Independent Expert Panel's \(IEP\) report](#) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014. This set out what Defra would do in advance of the second year of culling in Gloucestershire and Somerset this year following the Panel's recommendations.

Defra has worked closely with Natural England and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) to develop the detail of how monitoring will be implemented for this year's culls in Somerset and Gloucestershire. This document sets out how the effectiveness and humaneness of this year's culls will be monitored.

Monitoring will be set out in standard operating procedures for both Natural England and AHVLA to ensure consistency and reliability of reporting. The standard operating procedures and compliance with them will be subject to independent audit, as in 2013.

## 2. Humaneness monitoring

Defra has considered carefully the assessment of humaneness by the Independent Expert Panel and their conclusions and recommendations. It is clear that in the overwhelming majority of cases where the carcasses of shot badgers were retrieved, time to death was rapid and well within the 5 minute benchmark set by the IEP – 68 of the 69 badgers in this category died in 66 seconds or less. Concerns about humaneness focused on badgers that appeared to have been missed but where there was uncertainty about the true outcome. To improve on the level of humaneness achieved in the first year we need to increase the proportion of shots taken where the badger is killed and the carcass retrieved. This requires improved accuracy of shooting and enhanced training has been done to achieve this. The monitoring of the humaneness of controlled shooting in 2014 will therefore consist of:

- Field visits to carry out a representative number of observations of controlled shooting to record numbers of shots taken and numbers of carcasses retrieved. Shots at badgers where no carcass is retrieved will be explicitly recorded. These visits will be carried out by Natural England who will aim to carry out observations of a minimum of 60 badgers across the two areas being shot, which will provide a sufficiently robust sample to assess accuracy and is the same as the target sample size in the first year of culling.
- Post-mortem examinations carried out by AHVLA vets with the aim of examining a random sample of 60 carcasses from each area to look for evidence of multiple shots and to confirm that the injuries to the vital organs in the thoracic area are consistent with rapid time to death. This procedure will be simplified and targeted in light of the experience gained by the pathologists who carried out this activity last year. As well as random

checks, other carcasses may be selected in a targeted way if particular concerns need to be followed up (e.g. following observation in the field visits).

The results of this monitoring will be reviewed after the completion of culling in both areas and will be made publicly available. In addition, the procedures set out above will also enable feedback to be provided during the cull enabling a continuous assessment of the levels of accuracy in controlled shooting.

### **3. Effectiveness monitoring**

The pilots showed that the methodologies available for estimating badger populations are imprecise. Monitoring will therefore focus on ensuring sufficient and recorded contractor effort and the outcomes in terms of the number of badgers culled, their location, and ongoing assessment of evidence of remaining badger activity through field signs and sightings.

This information will enable a spatial and real-time assessment of the effort deployed and progress made across the culling areas, allowing Natural England to make an ongoing assessment of the intensiveness and consistency of the effort deployed across the culling area. To achieve this, the licensees are required to provide Natural England with a range of data which will be quality assured by AHVLA staff before being processed for use by Natural England. Natural England will monitor these throughout culling operations this year. This spatial understanding of effort and progress within the culling period was not available last year as the methods used provided only a retrospective analysis.

In accordance with the Licence conditions, Natural England has specified the minimum and maximum numbers of badgers to be removed this year in each area. This will allow an assessment, albeit with uncertainty, of progress made by comparing the number of badgers culled with the estimate of badger population in each cull area and taking into account other evidence.

Post-cull analysis by AHVLA based on all the available information collected will allow a final estimate of the effectiveness of the culling operation.

### **4. Conclusion**

Defra is satisfied that the planned procedures for monitoring humaneness and effectiveness in 2014 will permit ongoing assessment as the culls progress as well as allowing for a robust assessment to be made after the end of the cull as to standards of effectiveness and humaneness.

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