

Natural England

Summary of badger control compliance monitoring during 2018

Annex B

December 2018

Background

Natural England is the competent authority for badger control licensing for the purpose of preventing the spread of bovine tuberculosis. It is responsible for conducting visits of cage-trapping and controlled shooting contractors to monitor compliance with licence conditions and the published Best Practice Guides. The methodology and rationale used were the same as published in December 2017¹.

Following the success of the monitoring approach adopted for controlled shooting contractors in 2017, Natural England focused its resources to monitor:

- approximately 10% of controlled shooting contractors operating in Areas 22 to 32; and
- by exception in Areas 3 to 21.

Monitoring of cage-trapping contractors was conducted at a lower level to reflect the fact that this is a long established method of catching badgers, the humaneness of which has been previously investigated².

Field monitoring

Natural England deployed 13 Monitors to conduct monitoring visits of contractors licensed to carry out controlled shooting and cage-trapping.

The number of compliance monitoring visits conducted in each area is presented in Table 1. Percentage figures are based on the number of compliance visits conducted as a proportion of the total contractors active for that method.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670226/badger-control-monitoring-summary-2017-annexb.pdf.

²Woodroffe R. *et al.* (2005) Welfare of badgers (*Meles meles*) subjected to culling: patterns of trap-related injuries. *Animal Welfare*, 14, 11-17.

Table 1: Number of compliance monitoring visits conducted by Natural England Monitors during badger control operations in 2018.

Area	Controlled shooting	Cage-trapping
Area 22 – Cornwall	31 (21.7%)	12 (4.7%)
Area 23 – Devon	12 (16.2%)	6 (4.7%)
Area 24 – Devon	10 (14.3%)	7 (5.9%)
Area 25 – Devon	8 (15.4%)	6 (6.7%)
Area 26 – Devon	7 (20%)	7 (8%)
Area 27 – Devon	5 (20%)	5 (13.9%)
Area 28 – Devon	5 (20.8%)	3 (4.4%)
Area 29 – Gloucestershire	10 (16.9%)	4 (5.4%)
Area 30 – Somerset	15 (17.2%)	4 (5.7%)
Area 31 – Staffordshire	26 (17.2%)	12 (5.8%)
Area 32 – Cumbria	4 (15.4%)	2 (4.7%)

Contractor compliance and competency

The levels of compliance and competency of controlled shooting and cage-trapping contractors observed in the field by Monitors are presented in Table 2. Percentage figures are based on the number of criteria assigned to each level as a proportion of the total criteria assessed during compliance monitoring visits. These levels were the same as those used in 2017:

- Level 1 – Demonstrates the ability to execute all indicated tasks without guidance.
- Level 2 – Acceptably demonstrates the ability to execute most of the required tasks with little or no guidance. While sufficiently competent, they could benefit from continued intermittent oversight.
- Level 3 – Does not acceptably demonstrate the ability to execute the necessary tasks. Requires or would benefit from additional training or supervised practice.

Table 2: Compliance with licence conditions and the Best Practice Guides by contractors monitored by Natural England during badger control operations in 2018.

Level	Controlled shooting criteria	Cage-trapping criteria
Level 1	97.9%	93.9%
Level 2	2.1%	6.1%
Level 3	0.0%	0.0%

Controlled shooting observations

Monitors were equipped with suitable viewing equipment to observe shooting events³; remaining close enough to the contractor team to enable a clear view of the target species prior to and post shot. Observations that were recorded in the field included numbers of badgers shot at and retrieved (including the number of shots taken for each badger), numbers of badgers shot at but missed and numbers of badgers shot at but wounded and lost.

Where Monitors observed a shooting event, they recorded badger reaction to the shot and assigned this to one of four distinct categories:

- ‘Dropped to the shot’;
- ‘Reacted to the shot, moved a short distance and dropped’;
- ‘Reacted to the shot, follow-up shot(s) taken and dropped’; or
- ‘Reacted to the shot, moved a short distance, follow-up shot(s) taken and dropped’.

To make sure that a Monitor could differentiate between a ‘miss’ and ‘a wounded and lost’ event, the following information was recorded on the circumstances of the shot:

- Distance of the badger when the shot was taken? This will have an influence on where the bullet actually strikes relative to the Point of Aim (POA). For example, if the badger is within 20 metres of the contractor, the bullet strike will be slightly low of the POA on a rifle that is zeroed at 70 metres.
- Any audible bullet strike? If a bullet is on target, there will be an audible ‘thud’ or ‘plop’. A bullet that is off target will have little (if any) audible strike when entering an earth backstop.
- Any reaction to the shot? A badger that has been hit will exhibit some sort of reaction whether this is dropping to the ground, jumping forward or into the air, spinning round.
- Gait of badger when it left the site? A badger that has been hit will usually exhibit an abnormal gait when leaving the site.
- Any blood, hair or bone at the strike site? An absence of any of these signs suggests that the shot was a miss.
- Any blood along the exit trail of the badger? An absence of blood suggests a miss.
- Any badgers shot immediately prior to and/or post the miss? This will give an indication as to zero of the rifle i.e. its accuracy.

³ A ‘shooting event’ refers to all shots taken in the attempted dispatch of one badger. Each event results in either a badger that is ‘shot and retrieved’ or ‘shot at but not retrieved’.

Monitors recorded data on 89 shooting events during badger control operations in 2018. The outcome of each observed shooting event is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of shooting events observed by Natural England Monitors during badger control operations in 2018.

Observed shooting events	89
Badgers shot and retrieved	80 (89.9%)
Dropped to the shot	65
Dropped to the shot, moved a short distance and dropped	0
Reacted to the shot, follow-up shot(s) taken and dropped	9
Reacted to shot, moved short distance, follow-up shot(s) taken and dropped	6
Badgers shot at but not retrieved	9 (10.1%)
Shot at but missed	6
Shot but wounded and lost	3

In addition to the shooting events observed by Natural England, contractors self-reported any events where badgers were shot at but wounded and lost. Following the same methodology used in 2017, Natural England investigated each event to determine whether the badger was likely to have been wounded and lost, or if the shot is likely to have missed the target. The outcome of all shooting events is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Outcome of all shooting events in Areas 3 to 32 during badger control operations in 2018.

Total shooting events	20,989
Badgers shot and retrieved	20,637 (98.3%)
Badgers shot at but not retrieved	352 (1.7%)
Shot at but missed	306
Shot but wounded and lost	46

Cage-trapping observations

Monitors conducted compliance monitoring visits on 68 cage-trapping contractors who exhibited a high level of compliance with licence conditions and the Best Practice Guide (see Table 2). A small number of anomalies with trapping technique (not compliance related) were observed during monitoring but these were addressed through mentoring support from the relevant companies. There were isolated third party reports regarding non-compliance of cage-trapping contractors but following investigation, Natural England found no evidence to substantiate these allegations.



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