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Our ref: RFI 6129
Date: 24 January 2013

Dear ██████████,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Experiments on Badgers

Thank you for your request for information about experiments on badgers, which we received on 23 December 2013. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your questions and the answers are below:

Q1. How many badgers were caught from the wild?

A total of 61 badgers were caught from the wild in 2012 and 2013.

Q2. Under what legislation you were allowed to catch badgers – which I understood were a protected species?

Badgers can be caught under a Natural England licence which permits catching badgers for scientific reasons.

Q3. What experiments have been carried out on the badgers?

Experiments include the following:

- a) Research on oral TB vaccines for badgers; the purpose of this programme is to look at the efficacy and safety of different oral TB vaccines and determining optimal strategies for bait deployment in wild badgers. These studies also provide samples used to develop and optimise diagnostic assays for TB.

- b) Badger Immunocontraceptives; the purpose of this programme is determine whether an injectable contraceptive can reduce urban badger reproduction and associated sett expansion thereby reducing damage to property.
- c) Field approaches to identifying *Mycobacterium bovis* infection in badger populations; the purpose of this programme is to gather test data and samples for diagnostic test development from a well-studied wild badger population.
- d) A study to examine the interactions between cattle and badgers; the purpose of this project is to look at where and when badgers and cattle come in contact with each other on farms.

Further information on this research can be found at the links below:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=ProjectList&Completed=2&AUID=1262>

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=ProjectList&Completed=0&AUID=1263>

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=ProjectList&Completed=0&AUID=1264>

Q4. Have there have been any experiments into the possibility of gassing badgers in their setts? If so please tell me what gas was used and provide me with the research into humaneness and effectiveness.

No gassing experiments have taken place since the early 1980s.

Q5. Under what legislation you are allowed to a, keep badgers in captivity and b, carry out experiments on them.

- a) Under licence from Natural England.
- b) Under licence from Home Office under Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Q6. How many badgers remain in the captive programme?

Approximately 100 badgers are retained in the programme under procedures a and b referred to under question 3.

Q7. What you plan to do with the remaining badgers at the end of the experimentation programme?

The 100 badgers referred to above are retained for vaccine and immunocontraceptive studies. Badgers will be euthanised following conclusion of experimental studies into vaccine development. Post mortems are carried out on these badgers to identify any signs of lesions associated with TB infection and therefore establish vaccine effectiveness.

Badgers involved in contraceptive development are retained for further procedures.
Badgers involved in procedures c) and d) in question 3 remain in the wild at all times.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I have attached an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Defra TB Programme

Email: ccu.correspondence@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF