



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.defra.gov.uk

Our ref: RFI 5861  
Date: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Dear [REDACTED],

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Cull Marksmen Numbers**

Thank you for your request for information about numbers of badger cull marksmen and observations in the field, which we received on 21 September. 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 information you requested are shown below:

**Q1. Can you confirm the number of authorised marksmen is 71 across the two badger cull zones? /Q2. Could you confirm the total authorised across the 2 badger cull zones if the amount is more than 71?**

The actual number of contractors across the two zones is 200 and not 71. Initially there were 111 marksmen, but this number rose to 200 – 94 operating in West Gloucestershire and 106 in Somerset but not all are necessarily active throughout the pilot period.

**Q3. Could you confirm the amount of audits of marksmen across the 2 cull zones will be 60?**

Yes, at least 60 observations were carried out.

**Q4. Could you confirm that every marksman will be audited for their skills and compliance?/ Q5. If my figures are correct then approximately 18% of marksmen will not have an audit at all. In fact some marksmen may be audited twice. /Q7. Can you confirm that Defra will not audit every marksman because the figures don't add up?**



Every marksman is required to attend a training course covering safety, security, practicalities of badger control, and anatomical and behavioural characteristics of badgers including how they differ from other species. All marksmen are also required to pass a test of marksmanship at night. It was never the intention that all marksmen would be audited during operations. Natural England selected marksmen randomly throughout the pilot period to ensure they were complying with the licence conditions. In total 22% of marksmen were observed by Natural England (please note these observations are separate from the AHVLA humaneness monitoring).

The Best practice guidance for controlled shooting and the Training Course guidance are available at the following link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/05/03/pb13716-shooting-guidance/>

**Q6. Will you be releasing results of your audits and compliance to show an 'open book' policy once the cull is completed?**

Yes.

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](http://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 also attach 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](mailto: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](mailto: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