



[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Your ref:** RFI 6139  
**Date:** 30 January 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Experiments**

Thank you for your request for information about experiments on badgers which we received on 03 January. 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).

The responses to your questions are below:

**Q1. How many badgers were captured and how many were bred?**

Forty-nine badgers were captured and approximately 30 were bred.

**Q2. Exactly what tests were carried out?**

Experiments on captive badgers involve 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 contraceptives can provide a humane method of badger management in areas of human/badger conflict.

**Q3. How many badgers, if any, were set free?**

No captive badgers are released back into the wild. Badgers involved in vaccine and immunocontraceptive studies are retained although badgers will be euthanised following conclusion of experimental studies into vaccine development. Post mortems are carried out on these badgers to identify signs of lesions associated with TB infection. Badgers are retained on an ongoing basis for contraceptive studies.

**Q4. How many were killed?**

Captive badgers are euthanised when they reach the end of their research protocol in compliance with the Animal Scientific Procedures Act 1986. Over the past two years, 63 badgers have been euthanised.

**Q5. How many are you still testing on?**

There are 101 badgers currently in captivity.

**Q6. If this testing has been of any value whatsoever - what results have you found?**

The research is important and of value. Research is ongoing into oral vaccines which are a preferred option for vaccination as they would be simpler to introduce into the badger population and probably cheaper to use than cage trapping, training personnel in vaccination techniques and their deployment in the field would not be needed. Similarly it is important to have an accurate diagnostic test which can be used in the field would be useful to identify infected badgers in situ. At present, diagnostic tests are available but work is underway to develop tests of increased accuracy and/or practicality. The outcomes from the research are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at scientific conferences/meetings where appropriate.

Only work of high value is commissioned by Defra after a stringent peer review. The studies also require assessment by an Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Board which will only approve studies in which the benefits of the work outweigh the potential harm to the individual animals. The benefits of the work are also assessed when deciding if the Home Office will issue a licence for the studies to take place. The procedures are still ongoing and the results will be reported and released into the public domain when they are complete. Results of the work oral vaccination are not currently in the public domain as there are commercial confidentialities that need to be maintained.

**Q7. How much this has cost the tax payer on top of the badger cull pilot?**

The costs of the development of oral vaccines in badgers amount to £1,270,869 for the current financial year. Another £80,635 has been spent on other research projects.

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 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](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