



Our ref: RFI 6482
Date: 08 May 2014

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: TB in Badgers

Thank you for your request for information about the number of badgers dying from TB, which we received on 03 April. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs). We apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

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).

You asked us what evidence supported the Secretary of State's statement describing '[...] *the tens of thousands of badgers [...] dying of TB*' on Radio 4 on the 03 April.

High levels of TB were confirmed in badgers in the regions in which the cull areas are located during the Randomised Badger Cull Trial (RBCT) and other research work carried out by independent scientists. They recorded a prevalence of *M. bovis* in badgers in the proactively culled areas of 16.6% (http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/tb/isg/report/final_report.pdf). Subsequent analysis of the sensitivity of post-mortem protocol used during the trial indicates that this method underestimates the level of infection with *M. bovis* by approximately half. This indicates a prevalence of *M. bovis* in badgers of approximately 30% in proactively culled areas during the RBCT.

In the long-running study of badgers at Woodchester Park TB prevalence in badgers has increased by 30%.

In a separate study in Gloucestershire between 35% and 53% of badgers tested positive to a TB test.

Based on the evidence and research outlined above, we can determine that there are high levels of TB infection within the wildlife population, especially within the high incidence areas. Given the levels of infection outlined above, it would be reasonable to assume that the infected badger population will eventually die of the disease as TB lesions spread and develop- provided that they do not die of other causes. It should be emphasised, however, that it is difficult to calculate mortality rates for Bovine TB among badgers, given that we do not regularly post-mortem carcasses for cause of death.

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 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,

Defra TB Programme

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