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for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Our ref: RFI 7867

19 November 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER AND CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER, DEFRA**

Thank you for your email of 9 October 2015 to the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and Defra Chief Scientific Adviser about your open letter to Natural England of 11 August 2015. We apologize for the delay in responding.

You have asked that we treat the questions in your 9 October email as formal requests under the relevant freedom of information legislation. 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).

In your letter of 9 October 2015, you requested the following information:

1. For confirmation as to whether any Disease Risk Analysis has been conducted in relation to the cull licences.
2. Whether handling of potentially contaminated carcasses and equipment should be a high priority.
3. The number of female badgers released from traps because they were lactating for each cull zone and every year that culling has taken place.
4. Clarity on whether shotguns can be used by contractors to target free-roaming badgers.

In your first point, you ask whether any Disease Risk Analysis has been carried out. You have asked this with reference to the recommendation of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This recommendation was published in 2014. This post-dates Defra's assessments. Nevertheless the government's badger control policy consultation in 2010 available from



the National Archives included scientific and veterinary assessments. The previous government's 2011 Policy Statement published on gov.uk provides a clear policy rationale.

In your second point, you ask whether handling of potentially contaminated carcasses and equipment should be a high priority. The Best Practice Guidance documents published on gov.uk cover the handling badger carcasses and biosecurity matters. Natural England also checks for compliance with these measures when monitoring contractors.

In your third point, you ask how many lactating badgers were released from traps in each cull zone and for every year that culling has taken place. No lactating badgers have been identified and released from cage traps. This was expected because the time of the year when culling may be permitted is restricted in order to avoid the possibility of leaving dependent cubs underground.

In your fourth point, you ask whether shotguns can be used by contractors to target free-roaming badgers. We can confirm that shotguns are not being used for the purposes of controlled shooting in any of the three licensed cull areas.

Information disclosed in response to this EIRs request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

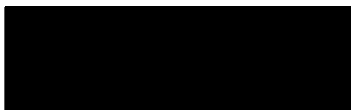
We attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

We also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

The CVO and Defra Chief Scientific Adviser have also noted the points raised in your open letter to Natural England of 11 August 2015, which are not requests for information under the EIRs, and a response to those points will be sent under separate cover

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

Yours sincerely,



**Defra FOIA and EIRs Team**  
**Area 4C, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## Annex A

### Copyright

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## Annex B

### 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 [REDACTED] Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@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