

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Natural England Chief Scientist's advice on the outcome of Supplementary Badger Control 2018

March 2019

Contents

Background.....	2
Effectiveness.....	2
Safety of the operations	3
Humaneness of controlled shooting	3
Chief Veterinary Officer's advice on the outcome of Supplementary Badger Control 2018.....	4

Background

In July 2017, Defra announced¹ that as part of the Government's 25-year strategy to eradicate bovine tuberculosis and protect the livelihoods of dairy and beef farmers, Natural England could license and authorise local farmers and landowners to carry out Supplementary Badger Control operations across two areas in Gloucestershire and Somerset.

Badger control licences were issued in the two areas in August 2017 and operations were authorised to take place for a second year in each area, between 28 June 2018 and 15 January 2019. Cage-trapping and humane dispatch of trapped badgers by shooting ceased in both areas on 30 November 2018 and controlled shooting of badgers ceased on 15 December 2018 in Somerset and 15 January 2019 in Gloucester. This document sets out the outcomes of these operations in those areas.

Effectiveness

Estimates for the number of badgers to be removed from each licensed area were made by Defra / APHA for the purpose of giving advice to Natural England for the setting of minimum and maximum numbers. The estimates, methodologies and rationale used were published in September 2018.²

As in previous years, Natural England monitored the progress in both licensed areas. The numbers of badgers removed were reported in accessible land parcels on a regular basis. This provided information on the number of badgers dispatched, the spatial distribution of badger control activity and the effort that was used. This enabled an assessment of the progress that each badger control company was making towards achieving the minimum and maximum numbers, and allowed Natural England to assess whether resources were being effectively deployed across accessible land.

The number of badgers removed against the minimum and maximum number is presented in Table 1 for each licensed area.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-authorisation-for-badger-control-in-2017>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-natural-england-on-setting-minimum-and-maximum-numbers-of-badgers-to-be-controlled-in-2018>

Table 1 Total number of badgers removed per licensed area

Area	Minimum Number	Maximum Number	Badgers Removed	Of which:	
				Removed by controlled shooting	Removed by cage trapping
Area 1 – Gloucestershire	125	540	197	168	29
Area 2 - Somerset	109	578	136	100	36

Safety of the operations

Operations in both licensed areas were carried out to a high standard of public safety. In relation to the use of firearms, no incidents affecting public safety were reported in either area.

Humaneness of controlled shooting

Natural England ensures compliance with the standards set out in the Best Practice Guides for the controlled shooting of free-ranging badgers and cage trapping and dispatch of badgers through risk-based monitoring. All contractors in both licensed areas had completed the required training. No incidents affecting humaneness were reported.

Conclusions

The badger population reductions achieved in the two areas have been evaluated on the basis of the numbers and locations of badgers culled, the numbers culled against effort over time, and our assessments of the level and spatial distribution of culling effort deployed.

Based on the available information, I have concluded that companies delivered the level of supplementary badger control required by the policy; that the reduction in badger population has been maintained in both areas; and that an effective supplementary cull has taken place.

The minimum and maximum numbers for 2019 will be set in line with Defra's commitments under the Bern Convention. In order to help inform this, I would recommend that some sett survey work is undertaken to understand badger activity levels prior to the 2019 SBC. We will continue to ensure that local extinction does not occur in order to protect the UK's badger population. We will also continue to undertake surveillance and monitoring of other protected species in order to ensure that we avoid any adverse consequences on them.

Dr Tim Hill

Chief Scientist, Natural England

Chief Veterinary Officer's advice on the outcome of Supplementary Badger Control 2018

The aim of supplementary badger control is to preserve the disease control benefits which are expected from the completion of a four-year badger control operation. In order to achieve this, supplementary control needs to be effective in maintaining a reduced level of badger population.

The badger population reductions achieved in the two areas have been evaluated on the basis of the numbers and locations of badgers culled, the numbers culled against effort over time, and Natural England's independent assessments of the level and spatial distribution of culling effort deployed.

Based on the available information, the Chief Veterinary Officer's (CVO) advice is that a reduction in the badger population has been maintained in both areas and that an effective supplementary cull has taken place.

© Crown copyright 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ or email PSI@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications