



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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[Redacted]

By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: FOI2019/12951
15 July 2019

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: TB SURVEILLANCE IN BADGERS

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 17 June 2019, about TB surveillance in badgers. 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 information you requested and our response is detailed below.

"Please provide the results to date of bovine Tb surveillance in badgers removed from cull zones during 2017, 2018."

As mentioned in our previous response (FOI2019/00901), the 2017 surveillance exercise was small scale and its purpose was to test the feasibility of collecting post mortem blood samples and whether the proposed sampling method was effective. The samples were not tested for TB. The pilot was successful in efficiently transporting the carcasses, so the sampling methodology was rolled out in two areas in 2018. Further research is required on the methodology before it can be used on a wider scale. Results from the culture and PCR from one area are still in the course of completion, and will be published in due course.

As these data are not yet finalised, the information is therefore being withheld at present because it falls under the exception in regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs.

Regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs relates to material that is still in the course of completion, unfinished documents and incomplete data. In respect of these data, Defra and external

bodies are still in the process of finalising the work. It is Defra's intention to publish the data as soon as possible after the aforementioned has concluded.

In applying this exception, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure. Defra recognises that there is a public interest in understanding the work of Government and the accountability there may be. We also understand that information in relation to bovine TB surveillance in badgers is an extremely debatable subject and providing such information would show the transparency of Government decisions. However, releasing information before all of the data has been collated and verified and reports have been fully reviewed and finalised would likely mislead the public, if they have to be revised as part of the process. This includes establishing whether any further work is necessary before drawing the data to a close. This would not be in the public interest. Moreover, as mentioned above, Defra will be publishing in due course and so there would not be any further public interest to be served by early disclosure of the information which will be available to all interested parties in due course.

Results from the other area – East Cumbria – have been published and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-surveillance-in-wildlife-in-england/tb-surveillance-in-badgers-during-year-1-badger-control-operations-in-eastern-cumbria-low-risk-area-2018>

As the information you have requested is already publicly available and easily accessible to you in another form or format, regulation 6(1)(b) of the EIRs exempts Defra from providing a copy of the information with this response to your request.

We 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 the address below.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted]

EIRs/FOI Case Officer
Information Rights Team
InformationRequests@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 ^[Redacted], Head of Information Rights, Area 4A, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: 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