



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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[Redacted]

By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: EIR2021/11525
17 May 2021

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Cull Results 2020

Thank you for your request for information of 26 April 2021 about the badger cull results 2020. 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).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

1. *How many badgers were tested for TB in the 2020 cull?*

We do not routinely test culled badgers for TB in the Edge and High Risk Areas. Badgers culled in the Low Risk Area (LRA) are tested for the purposes of monitoring prevalence, contributing to information for future operations and control of disease in LRA hotspots. These can be found on GOV.UK at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974351/tb-surveillance-in-wildlife-mar2021.pdf

The information is therefore exempt under regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIRs, which relates to information which is not held at the time when an applicant's request is received. Regulation 12(4)(a) is a qualified exception, which usually means that a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether or not information should be disclosed or withheld. However, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who is the independent regulator for requests made under the EIRs, takes the view that a public interest test in cases where the information is not held would serve no useful purpose. Therefore, in line with the ICO's view, Defra has not conducted a public interest test in this case.

2. *How many badgers actually had TB in the 2020 cull? Answers required in individual numbers and as a percentage of total badgers killed.*

This information is not held as not all culled badgers are tested for TB. The information is therefore exempt under regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIRs, which relates to information which



is not held at the time when an applicant's request is received. Regulation 12(4)(a) is a qualified exception, which usually means that a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether or not information should be disclosed or withheld. However, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who is the independent regulator for requests made under the EIRs, takes the view that a public interest test in cases where the information is not held would serve no useful purpose. Therefore, in line with the ICO's view, Defra has not conducted a public interest test in this case.

3. What scientific evidence do you base the cull on and from what year is that evidence?

Professor Sir Charles Godfray's independent review of the science published in 2018, which brought together leading UK experts, concluded that TB spreads within and between populations of badgers and cattle and that spread from badgers to cattle is an important cause of herd breakdowns in high-incidence areas. Badgers represent a reservoir of TB for cattle in large regions of the West of England and the Midlands.

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RBCT) was carried out in England from 1997 to 2005 and showed that there would be a reduction in cattle TB incidence. Using data from the start of the RBCT, it has been estimated through mathematical modelling that infected badgers contribute to some 50 percent of cattle herd TB breakdowns in high incidence areas, either directly or indirectly. More recent analysis, published by the Animal & Plant Health Agency, estimates that between 5,000 and 14,000 farms are exposed to infected wildlife and 36% of new TB breakdowns are directly due to wildlife.

The Godfray review, and its subsequent responses, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england>

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

4. How much tax money was spent on the 2020 cull?

The government's badger control costs paper for 2020 is under preparation and will be published in due course.

The information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exception in regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs, which relates to material that is still in the course of completion, unfinished documents and incomplete data.

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. We also understand that information in relation to bovine TB surveillance in badgers is a subject of public interest and we accept that providing such information when it is ready for publication is important in demonstrating the transparency of public policy and public funds.

However, releasing information before the results are complete, fully reviewed and finalised would risk misleading the public and may not provide an accurate reflection if it has to be revised as part of the process. Defra will be publishing the information in due course and it will be available to all interested parties on the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-government-badger-control-costs>

There would therefore 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.

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 me.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

Information Rights Team

InformationRequests@defra.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 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to [Redacted], Head of Information Rights via email at InformationRequests@defra.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's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO's offices are currently closed so please visit their website on how to contact them during this period, here:

<https://ico.org.uk>

Additionally if you wish to make a complaint to the ICO please use the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>