



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
Access to Information Team
Woodham Lane
New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 3NB

www.gov.uk/apha

Our ref: EIR2023/16201
13 September 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Population Monitoring

Thank you for your request for information of 18th August about Badger Population Monitoring. APHA 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. What are your present proposals (or range of options) for monitoring badger population in former culling areas? I.e. What methods are you using to estimate badger population levels moving forward?

As the information you have requested is due to be published in the future it is exempt from release citing Regulation 12(4)(d) of Environmental Information Regulations. Section 12.—(4). Further details regarding this exemption can be found below.

2. - Could you confirm when information will be available for each area and at what intervals this will continue to be shared in the future?

APHA can confirm that as the methodology is not yet finalised this information is not held.

3. Are you able to explain why these measures were not implemented from the start of the cull, instead of retrospectively 10 years after the mass cull has been implemented? Can you supply us with copies of records in any format which explain or set out the decision making process leading to such measures not being introduced at the start of the cull?

The Government's response following the 2013 cull to the Independent Expert Panel recommendations explains in its response to IEP recommendation 10.6.9 why cull sample matching using genotyping was discontinued as a measurement metric in the culls. It also explains why different approaches would be used in subsequent culls. Please see link below.

[Defra response: Pilot Badger Culls in Somerset and Gloucestershire: Report by the Independent Expert Panel \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

4. Can you provide full scientific results of your population monitoring from the start of the cull to date for each area studied with details of techniques used. e.g.. capture-mark recapture, cull-sample matching, sett surveys etc.

The methodologies, data and results of population estimation are set out in the IEP report and related papers for the 2013 cull and in Defra's advice to Natural England on setting the minimum and maximum numbers for 2014 onwards.

5- Please can you provide all raw data for the population monitoring from the start of the cull to now.

This sett survey data information is not held by APHA.

6 - With reference to the following:

"Using a step-by-step series of assumptions about badger reproduction, mortality and badger incursions from outside the cull area, which resulted in an approximate 21% net increase in the remaining population between the end of the first cull and the start of the second based on figures in the Literature". Can you please provide information to what this step-by-step series of assumptions are and on what basis the assumptions are made?

The step by step approach (method III) used as one of the methods in the 2014 advice to Natural England on setting minimum and maximum numbers is explained in detail in paragraphs 43 to 46 in Annex 1 of that paper.

When assessing disease levels in badgers Badger Trust would like to know:

7. - What are your proposals for monitoring bTB in badgers?

As the information you have requested is due to be published in the future it is exempt from release citing Regulation 12(4)(d) of Environmental Information Regulations. Section 12.—(4). Further details regarding this exemption can be found below.

8. - How and when are you measuring baseline disease levels in badgers?

APHA can confirm that this has not yet been decided therefore this information is not held.

9. - In what ways are you assessing whether an individual animal is sufficiently infected that they are capable of disease transmission?

APHA can confirm that this is not in the scope of the badger surveillance project.

10. - What degree of specificity are you using to determine that the badgers are carrying an active bTB infection e.g. is it sufficient to determine whether the spoligotype is from local cattle or from a different source.

APHA can confirm that this is not in the scope of the badger surveillance project.

11. - How will you demonstrate the direction of infection? Cattle to cattle infection remains the dominant pathway for cases among cattle, what evidence will you be gathering that enables you to demonstrate that any given non bovine host such as a badger has infected an individual cow?

APHA can confirm that this is not in the scope of the badger surveillance project. Any Whole genome sequencing data collected as part of surveillance may inform later analyses of this topic.

12. - How are you ensuring that other potential sources of bTB in the environment are also being accounted for and measured for the specific spogliotype? E.g. deer, sheep, pigs, non-badger wildlife, soil inverts.”

APHA can confirm that this is not in the scope of the badger surveillance project as it is looking at disease in badgers not in other species.

Regulation 12(4)(d) of Environmental Information Regulations. Section 12.—(4).

The information relating to future publications you have 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.

The information you have requested is currently in the course of completion and will be published in due course. In applying this exception, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

APHA 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 publicly funded research.

Releasing information before the results are complete, fully reviewed and finalised would, however, risk misleading the public and this would not be in the public interest.

Information disclosed in response to this EIR request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIR 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.

An Annex is attached which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Access to Information Team

enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law.

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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 regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to the Access to Information Team at the address at the top of this letter or email enquiries@apha.gov.uk and the team will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, 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 APHA's own complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Please click [here](#) for further contact details.