Independent report on badger vaccinations welcomed

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The Wildlife Trusts in Wales welcome independent report on badger vaccination programme

The Wildlife Trusts in Wales join Rebecca Evans, Minister for Farming and Food, in welcoming the independent report on the likely impact the lack of available BCG vaccine would have on the badger vaccination programme in Wales. Following the decision to suspend sourcing the vaccine due to a global shortage, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) was commissioned to identify the likely impact the non-availability of Badger-BCG in 2016 would have on the vaccination project within the Intensive Action Area (IAA) in West Wales.

The report concludes that despite not being able to complete the fifth and final year, four years of badger vaccination would achieve a reduction in prevalence of TB in badgers in the IAA. APHA modelling showed that vaccinating for four years, missing year five, and returning to vaccinate in year six is not different from vaccinating for five consecutive years.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW) has completed two years of a five year vaccination programme...
The Wildlife Trusts will continue their support for badger vaccination and will remain firmly opposed to badger culling as we do not believe it will make any meaningful contribution to the eradication of bovine TB. In fact, in some circumstances it has been shown to make the issue worse as it disrupts the badgers’ social group causing individuals to range beyond their territory, coming into contact with neighbouring animals and increasing the risk of disease transmission. Vaccination is the only approach that actually reduces the prevalence of bovine tuberculosis in badgers. In addition, as this new report has showed, is a also resilient approach where the benefits are not put at risk as a result of changing circumstances- unlike culling.

Dr Lizzie Wilberforce, Conservation Manager for WTSWW, said:
“The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales is obviously very disappointed that circumstances have required the suspension of Welsh Government’s successful badger vaccination programme. However, we recognise that this suspension is a result of unavoidable external pressures, and accept the need to prioritise global human health. We urge all parties to work towards resolving the BCG shortage as soon as possible so that badger vaccination programmes can resume quickly so that positive momentum can be maintained.”

“As soon as circumstances allow, we will continue to work towards delivering badger vaccination on our own land and support the Welsh Government’s badger vaccination delivery in the Intensive Action Area.”

James Byrne, Living Landscapes Manager for Wildlife Trusts Wales, stated:
“We continue to fully support the Welsh Government’s successful evidence led approach to combating this disease within one of Wales’ most iconic, and much loved, native animals. With only 5.7% of the TB outbreak caused by badgers[i], the Wildlife Trusts believe that cattle measures should be at the centre of efforts to tackle the disease, alongside a strategic programme of badger vaccination.”

To find out more about Bovine TB and why GWT and other Trusts ar firmly behind the badger vaccination programme visit [here](#).