Wildlife Trusts in Wales speak out in support of Welsh Government badger vaccination programme

Wednesday 2nd December 2015

The Wildlife Trusts in Wales have expressed their concern at the shortage of BCG vaccine which has necessitated the suspension of badger vaccination programmes designed to reduce bovine tuberculosis in cattle.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW) has completed two years of a five year vaccination programme thanks to support from the Welsh Government’s Badger Vaccination Grant. The latest figures from the Welsh Government show that by October 2014, 4,000 badgers had been successfully vaccinated in intensive action areas (IAAs), most of which are based in north Pembrokeshire.

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.
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.”

[i] Source: Welsh Government

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