



## Cull decision is shot in the dark

The Wildlife Trusts today express disappointment and regret in advance of the Government's expected decision to press ahead with a cull of badgers in pilot areas in England.

The Wildlife Trusts call on the Government to put biosecurity and vaccination at the centre of efforts to tackle this disease and avoid wasting more time and money on a badger cull.

Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscape for The Wildlife Trusts, said:

*"A badger cull is the wrong tool to address this serious and complex problem and a distraction from other measures to tackle bovine TB. An industry-led cull with open shooting in the countryside is untested and these pilots will not provide a scientific evaluation of the impact on bovine TB. The rationale for any cull of native species needs to be extremely clear and well proven. We do not believe this is the case with the proposed badger cull."*

The Wildlife Trusts believe that Defra should pursue the following as a matter of priority:

- Support landowners to improve on-farm biosecurity and the deployment of the injectable BadgerBCG vaccine;
- Continue to develop an oral vaccine for badgers;
- Complete development of a cattle vaccine and secure change to EU regulation to permit its commercial deployment.

Paul Wilkinson continues:

*"The Government's priority should be preventing transmission of the disease on-farm, through improved biosecurity, badger vaccination and making swift progress on a cattle vaccine."*

Earlier this year, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust was the first non-governmental organisation to begin deployment of the injectable BadgerBCG vaccine on seven

**The Wildlife Trusts**

The Kiln  
Waterside  
Mather Road  
Newark, Nottinghamshire  
NG24 1WT

Tel (01636) 677711

Fax (01636) 670001

Email

[info@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:info@wildlifetrusts.org)

Website

[www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

**Press Office**

Anna Guthrie  
Media & PR Manager  
Office: 01636 670075  
Mobile: 07887 754659  
Fax: 01636 670001

Email:

[aguthrie@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:aguthrie@wildlifetrusts.org)

**Patron**

HRH The Prince of Wales  
KG KT GCB OM

**President**

Simon King OBE

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Registered Charity no. 207238  
Printed on environmentally-friendly  
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of its nature reserves. The outcomes from this first year of a five-year vaccination programme are available in a published report at: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/badgers-and-bovineTB](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/badgers-and-bovineTB)

**Contact information:**

Anna Guthrie (Media & PR Manager)

Office: 01636 670075

Mobile: 07887 754659

Email: [aguthrie@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:aguthrie@wildlifetrusts.org)

Tanya Perdikou (Media & Campaigns Officer)

Office: 01636 670057

Mobile: 07887 754657

Email: [tperdikou@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:tperdikou@wildlifetrusts.org)

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The Wildlife Trusts has an ISDN line available for radio interviews. Please contact us to book an interview.

**Notes for editors:**

**The Wildlife Trusts (TWT)** [wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK. All are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We have more than 800,000 members. Find out more about badgers, bovine TB on The Wildlife Trusts' web page <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/badgers-and-bovineTB>.