



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
UNITED KINGDOM

The Rt. Hon. Caroline Spelman MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
House of Commons,
Westminster,
London
SW1A 0AA

30th August 2012

Dear Secretary of State

Request to delay the badger cull until after the Bern Convention has delivered its decision

The government's proposal to license farmers and landowners to shoot badgers at night to kill at least 70 per cent of their population in license areas is, in our expert opinion, fundamentally flawed both scientifically and morally, and does not represent a credible long-term solution to the problem of bovine tuberculosis (bTB).

The vast majority of available scientific evidence indicates that culling badgers (the majority of which are likely to be healthy, non- bTB carriers) is not an effective way of controlling bTB in cattle and can in fact increase incidence of bTB in some circumstances. In 2007 the Independent Scientific Group evaluating the results of a ten-year 'Randomised Badger Culling Trial' concluded that "*badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to cattle TB control in Britain.*" Therefore we cannot agree with the government's assertion that its badger cull proposal is 'science-led'. Indeed it appears to ignore much of the science.

Badgers are listed in Appendix III of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and, as such, the UK government is committed to regulate their exploitation to keep populations 'out of danger.' So, in January this year, concerned that the proposed shooting of thousands of free-running badgers may constitute a breach of the Convention, Humane Society International/UK (HSI UK) lodged a formal complaint with Bern in Strasbourg.

Bern has confirmed to HSI UK that there are sufficient grounds for it to consider the complaint. However, we understand there is a strong possibility that the government may proceed with the cull before the Bern Convention is due to consider the matter.

If, as it states, the government takes seriously its responsibilities to wildlife and respects the authority of the Bern Convention, it is logical that any badger cull be delayed until after the Convention has decided whether or not it might constitute a breach. In addition, and according to the government's own policy documents, starting and then stopping a cull could expose farmers and their cattle to the unnecessary risk of increasing localised TB outbreaks.

We therefore call on the government to delay the badger cull and await a decision from the Bern Convention.

Yours sincerely

Mark Jones, Veterinarian
Executive Director, Humane Society International/UK

Brian May CBE, Musician and founder of Save Me

Chris Packham, Naturalist and TV presenter

Joanna Lumley OBE, FRGS, Actress and Author

Jilly Cooper OBE, Journalist, Author and TV presenter

Dale Vince OBE, Founder and owner, Ecotricity

Lorraine Platt, Founder, Conservatives Against Foxhunting

Ian Redmond OBE, Zoologist and Conservationist

Philip Mansbridge, Chief Executive Officer, Care for the Wild
International

Will Travers OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Born Free Foundation

Bill Oddie OBE, Author, Actor, Comedian, Artist, Naturalist and
Musician

Dame Judi Dench, Actress

Mark Carwardine, Zoologist and Wildlife Presenter

Mike Dilger, Naturalist, Writer and Wildlife Presenter

Gavin Grant, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Joe Duckworth, Chief Executive Officer, League Against Cruel Sports

Nick Baker, Naturalist and Wildlife Presenter