



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
UNITED KINGDOM

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

06 July 2011

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Proposals to slaughter badgers in parts of England

I am writing to express our concern following press reports suggesting that the Cabinet will soon be asked to approve the mass slaughter of badgers in selected areas of England, in an attempt to control the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB).

The Humane Society International opposes the mass slaughter of badgers in the control of bTB, on the grounds that such action compromises the welfare and conservation badgers which are a protected species, and is not supported by the available scientific evidence or public opinion.

In reaching any decision on the mass slaughter of one of the UKs few remaining large wild mammals, we would expect the cabinet to consider the best scientific advice available, and to take public opinion into account. In respect of these considerations, I would like to remind you of the following facts:

- The Independent Scientific Group (ISG) charged with analysing the results of the 10 year Randomised Badger Culling Trial which was completed in 2007, concluded that "...badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to cattle TB control in Britain".¹ Subsequent scientific publications by members of the ISG found that "...reductions in cattle TB incidence achieved by repeated badger culling were not sustained in the long term after culling ended"²;
- The ISG's report identified weaknesses in cattle TB testing, and the movement of cattle, as being the major factors contributing to the spread of bTB¹;
- Stricter controls on cattle movement and testing introduced since 2008 have resulted in significant reductions in the numbers of cattle culled and herds under movement restriction, according to DEFRA's own figures.³ This improvement has taken place without a single badger being slaughtered;
- There is concern that some farmers may be trying to avoid slaughter orders on individual cattle by switching ear tags or by other means. A number of such cases have been highlighted by the Badger Trust in recent months.⁴ These concerns need to be addressed before any mass slaughter of wildlife is considered.

The Coalition Government's proposals to slaughter badgers were the subject of a DEFRA-led public consultation exercise, which was completed in December 2010. The results of this consultation have not yet been made publicly available. It would be entirely inappropriate for the Government to approve the mass slaughter of badgers before the public has had the opportunity to view and evaluate the results of the consultation.

I urge you to consider these points carefully in any deliberations you undertake on the mass slaughter of badgers, and to concentrate your efforts on stricter controls of cattle testing and movement, and the development of more innovative and less destructive methods of controlling the disease in badgers, such as vaccination.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely



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References:

¹http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20081027092120/http://defra.gov.uk/animalh/tb/isg/pdf/final_report.pdf

²Jenkins HE, Woodroffe R, Donnelly CA (2010) The Duration of the Effects of Repeated Widespread Badger Culling on Cattle Tuberculosis Following the Cessation of Culling. PLoS ONE 5(2): e9090. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0009090

³<http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/animals/diseases/tb/>

⁴http://www.badgertrust.org.uk/Attachments/Resources/498_S4.pdf

Humane Society International (HSI) is the international arm of The Humane Society of the United States, one of the world's largest animal protection organisations with more than 11 million members and constituents across the globe. HSI addresses issues such as inhumane practices and conditions affecting companion and farm animals, fur production, illegal trade in wildlife, threats to endangered species, slaughter of marine mammals, bullfighting and the use of animals in research and testing. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty worldwide — On the Web at hsi.org.