



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
UNITED KINGDOM

Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Cc Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for farming, food and marine environment

18th October 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

Pilot badger culls and diseased badgers

In relation to the disastrous pilot badger culls that are ongoing in Somerset and Gloucestershire, on 10th October you stated in a parliamentary answer to a question from Angela Smith MP that **'...some of the animals we have shot have been desperately sick—in the final stages of disease...'**ⁱ. You were subsequently quoted in an article in the Independent Newspaper on 18th October, that **'Animal groups are condemning badgers to a long, unpleasant death... It is shameful'**.ⁱⁱ

It is my understanding that, in spite of calls for badgers shot during the pilot culls to be tested for the presence of *Mycobacterium bovis*, such testing has not been carried out. Indeed in answer to a further parliamentary question on this issue from Philip Hollobone MP you defended the decision not to test badger carcasses on the grounds that **'carcasses that have been shot would not give an accurate reading following post-mortem'**ⁱⁱⁱ.

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RBCT)^{iv}, completed in 2005, remains the most comprehensive and credible piece of scientific work on the impact of culling badgers on the incidence and prevalence of bovine TB in cattle. During the RBCT, proactively culled badgers within areas considered high risk for bovine TB in cattle were tested and examined for bovine tuberculosis, and the overall prevalence of infection was found to be 14%; only a very small proportion (approx. 1%) were found on post mortem examination to be 'severely lesioned' and therefore might be considered likely to have been suffering clinical disease symptoms^v.

Your assertion that by opposing badger culling, **'animal groups are condemning badgers to a long, unpleasant death'** would therefore seem to fly in the face of the credible evidence available, that suggests only a very small proportion of badgers within populations in areas considered to be high risk for bovine TB are likely to be suffering clinical bTB symptoms at any point in time. I find it highly unlikely that badgers in Somerset or Gloucestershire would buck that trend.

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It is of course very important that information provided to Parliament and the public by government is at all times factual, evidence-based and true.

I would therefore request answers to the following questions:

1. Exactly what proportion of culled badgers were you referring to when you stated, in your response to Angela Smith MP on 10th October that **'...some of the animals we have shot have been desperately sick...'**?
2. How and by who was it ascertained, in the absence of testing for bovine TB, that the 'desperately sick' animals to which you refer were suffering from clinical disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* infection?
3. Why have the carcasses from badgers shot during the pilot trials to date not been tested for the presence of *Mycobacterium bovis*?
4. What exactly did you mean when you stated, in your answer to Philip Hollobone of 10th October, that **'carcasses that have been shot would not give an accurate reading following post-mortem'**, when well established methods exist for the testing of carcasses for the presence of *Mycobacterium bovis*?

Please consider these questions as a Freedom of Information request.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



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ⁱ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131010/debtext/131010-0001.htm#13101061000010>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/owen-paterson-animal-groups-are-condemning-badgersto-a-long-unpleasant-death-it-is-shameful-8877593.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131010/debtext/131010-0001.htm>

^{iv} http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/tb/isg/report/final_report.pdf p73-77

^v H. E. JENKINS, W. I. MORRISON, D. R. COX, C. A. DONNELLY, W. T. JOHNSTON, F. J. BOURNE, R. S. CLIFTON-HADLEY, G. GETTINBY, J. P. McINERNEY, G. H. WATKINS and R. WOODROFFE (2008). The prevalence, distribution and severity of detectable pathological lesions in badgers naturally infected with *Mycobacterium bovis*. *Epidemiology and Infection*, 136, pp 1350-1361. doi:10.1017/S0950268807009909.