

5 July 2024

Our ref: CH2024070

Tom Langton

By email only: TL@langton.co.uk



Foss House  
Kings Pool  
1-2 Peasholme  
Green  
York  
YO1 7PX

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter dated 20 June 2024.

We acknowledge your disappointment that a decision was made to reauthorise the existing seventeen Supplementary Badger Disease Control licences and to grant nine new ones.

We have reviewed the evidence and set out a rationale for our decision, taking into account the scientific evidence and the ability to deliver vaccination at scale.

Whilst the scientific assessment makes clear that vaccination and other alternatives could now be deployed successfully, we have considered whether we can be sufficiently confident that these approaches can be effective within the timescale and at the geographic scale required.

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) has advised that “any gap between the end of one form of badger control and the successful deployment of another, should be as narrow as possible to bank the maximum disease control benefits and ensure progress towards disease eradication by 2038 is not jeopardised”.

While the scientific evidence shows that disease reduction benefits to cattle achieved through badger culling are sustained for several years, it is currently not possible to conclude when alternative measures, either vaccination or more targeted badger control policy, will be operationally ready to maintain the reduced disease risk at the scale required. Taking account of the expert advice from the CVO, we cannot, at this time and with sufficient confidence, determine the likely gap between SBC licences and alternative measures, if SBC licences were to cease at this stage.

It is also clear however that scientific judgement has evolved to the extent that badger vaccination can be considered as a realistic alternative to supplementary culling in localised areas, and that more targeted interventions may offer a further alternative in the future. Given these developments, we have advised Defra that now is the time to fast track further assessment, planning, and engagement on alternatives such as vaccination so that the best available evidence can be developed for future licencing decisions.

With regard to the invitation in your letter to immediately revoke the 2024 SBC licences and licence authorisations that were issued in May 2024, we confirm that we will not be revoking them.

We also note your request to supply copies of the licences by return. We will consider this request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and respond within the statutory timescales.

Yours sincerely,



Oliver Harmar  
Chief Operating Officer  
[oliver.harmar@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:oliver.harmar@naturalengland.org.uk)

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

