House of Commons

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Bovine TB: badger culling

Sixth Report of Session 2005–06

Volume I

HC 905-I

House of Commons

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Bovine TB: badger culling

Sixth Report of Session 2005–06

Report, together with formal minutes and lists of oral and written evidence

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed 8 March 2006

HC 905-I
Published on 14 March 2006
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£0.00

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its associated bodies.

Current membership

Mr Michael Jack (Conservative, Fylde) (Chairman)
Mr David Drew (Labour, Stroud)
James Duddridge (Conservative, Rochford & Southend East)
Patrick Hall (Labour, Bedford)
Lynne Jones (Labour, Birmingham, Selly Oak)
Daniel Kawczynski (Conservative, Shrewsbury & Atcham)
David Lepper (Labour, Brighton Pavilion)
Mrs Madeleine Moon (Labour, Bridgend)
Mr Jamie Reed (Labour, Copeland)
Mr Dan Rogerson (Liberal Democrat, North Cornwall)
Sir Peter Soulsby (Labour, Leicester South)
David Taylor (Labour, North West Leicestershire)
Mr Shailesh Vara (Conservative, North West Cambridgeshire)
Mr Roger Williams (Liberal Democrat, Brecon & Radnorshire)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at

www.parliament.uk/efracom

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Matthew Hamlyn (Clerk), Jenny McCullough (Second Clerk), Jonathan Little and Dr Antonia James (Committee Specialists), Marek Kubala (Inquiry Manager), Andy Boyd and Alison Mara (Committee Assistants) and Lizzie Broadbent (Secretary).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 5774; the Committee's e-mail address is: efracom@parliament.uk.

Contents

Report

Page

1 Background 3

2 Our inquiry 3

3 Key concerns raised in evidence 4

Formal Minutes 6

Witnesses 7

List of written evidence 8

List of unprinted written evidence 9

1 Background

1. Bovine TB is a serious infectious disease of cattle that can be transmitted to humans and other animals. There has been an overall, sustained and continuing increase in the number, duration, severity and geographical distribution of bovine TB incidents in Great Britain in recent years.[1] Defra describes bovine TB as "one of the most difficult animal health problems that the farming industry faces in Great Britain today".[2]

2. Bovine TB is transmitted between cattle, but it is also present in wild animals such as deer and badgers. Defra's approach to tackling bovine TB has included cattle-related measures, such as testing of cattle herds for TB and slaughter of suspect animals, and experimental trials of badger culling in an effort to reduce the possibility of badger to cattle transmission.

3. On 15 December 2005, Defra issued a consultation paper on badger culling. It sought views on the principle of introducing a cull of badgers to help control bovine TB in cattle in England, and on three potential options for culling, all using some form of licensing:

- Individual licensing to help control bovine TB
- A general cull over large areas, through either farmer/landowner co-ordinated groups or a combination of state and farmer/landowner involvement
- Targeted culling over specific areas linked to herd incidence, in designated areas based on affected farms, and therefore, close to herds which have a history of bovine TB.

The consultation paper also sought views on different methods of culling.[3]

2 Our inquiry

4. The Committee decided to examine the Government's proposals for introducing badger culling as a bovine tuberculosis control measure, as set out in the consultation paper. In conducting its inquiry, the Committee focused on the key questions that Ministers should address in reaching conclusions on the issues set out in the consultation paper. It was not our intention to undertake a full-scale inquiry into the issue.[4] Instead, we sought to contribute to the Government's consultation through taking evidence from interested parties. We heard from scientists, including those on the Independent Scientific Group (ISG) established by Defra in 1998 to oversee the trials of badger culling, from the National

1 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Controlling the Spread of Bovine Tuberculosis in Cattle in High Incidence Areas in England: Badger Culling: A consultation document*, December 2005

2 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Government strategic framework for the sustainable control of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in Great Britain*, March 2005

3 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Controlling the Spread of Bovine Tuberculosis in Cattle in High Incidence Areas in England: Badger Culling: A consultation document*, December 2005

4 The Committee's most recent previous examination of the issue was its Thirteenth Report of Session 2003–04, *Bovine TB*, HC 638.

Farmers' Union (NFU), and from the Badger Trust. Their evidence, and the written evidence we also received, is published with this Report.

3 Key concerns raised in evidence

5. We believe the evidence we have taken forms a useful contribution to the consultation process, and expect Ministers to take note of it. In addition, we note below the key concerns which we have drawn from the evidence. We expect Ministers to take these points into account when finalising the Government's policy, in the light of the consultation exercise.

- Witnesses were concerned that Defra had not conducted adequate pre-consultation soundings of the scientific experts, or other interested parties, when formulating the questions and scenarios presented in the consultation document.[5] The Committee particularly noted in this context the words of Professor John Bourne, Chairman of the ISG, who said, "the consultation document is imbalanced, in the sense that two of the options from the scientific perspective are simply not tenable".[6] We also noted that the scientists who gave oral evidence raised questions as to the sustainability of the remaining option in the long term.[7]

- There was concern among the scientific witnesses that the consultation document had not reflected the findings of the ISG about the causes of the "edge effect"—that is, the increase in the incidence of bovine TB immediately outside an area that has been subject to culling.[8]

- An important omission from the consultation document was the lack of any consideration of the human dimension of bovine TB—the impact on farmers and their families—in the questions asked.[9]

- Concern was expressed to us about whether a sufficient number of people with the relevant skills and expertise were available to carry out any of the culling options presented by Defra.[10]

- Evidence suggested that the consultation should have done more to allow for comments on the introduction of measures other than badger culling, given the potential difficulties in disaggregating the impacts of a combined approach.[11]

6. We believe that, if the line the UK Government proposes to take differs from the position adopted by the ISG on what constitutes an effective culling strategy, Defra should

5 Qq 15 [ISG], 52 [Badger Trust], 53 [NFU]

6 i.e. localised culling and targeted culling (Qq 5–6)

7 i.e. a general cull over large areas (Qq 7 [Professor Bourne], 8–9 [Dr Cheeseman], 21 [Dr Woodroffe], 25 [Dr Cheeseman])

8 Qq 12, 13

9 Qq 68, 69

10 Q 48

11 Ev 61 [RSPCA], Q 35–38

publish details of the science underpinning its conclusions on the consultation exercise. The Committee would welcome an indication from the Government as to what role the two scientific papers, issued just prior to the launch of the consultation paper, will play in the consultation exercise.[12]

7. Following the oral evidence session, we received a letter from Ben Bradshaw MP, the Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare at Defra, commenting on the oral evidence and listing several questions he had sent to the ISG on 30 January 2006. His letter is printed with the other written evidence received during our inquiry.[13] We believe that the consultation exercise might have had more validity if the questions the Minister put to the ISG had been asked before the consultation commenced, and in time for the response from the ISG to be reflected in the questions asked by Defra in its consultation paper.

12 The two scientific papers referred to are: Donnelly, C.A., Woodroffe, R., Cox, D.R., Bourne, F.J., Cheeseman, C.L., Clifton-Hadley, R.S., Wei, G., Gettinby, G., Gilks, P., Jenkins, H., Johnston, W.T., Le Ferve, A.M., McInerney, J.P. & Morrison, W.I. (2005) "Positive and Negative effects of widespread badger culling on cattle tuberculosis", *Nature*, doi.10.1038/nature04454 and Woodroffe, R., Donnelly, C.A., Cox, D.R., Bourne, F.J., Cheeseman, C.L., Delahay, R.J., Gettinby, G., McInerney, J.P. & Morrison, W.I. (2005) "Effects of culling on badger Meles meles spatial organization: implications for the control of bovine tuberculosis", *Journal of Applied Ecology*, doi: 10.111/j.1365-2664.2005.01144.x.. They were published online on 14 December 2005, the day before Defra launched its consultation on badger culling.

13 Ev 104–105

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 8 March 2006

Members present:

Mr Michael Jack, in the Chair

Mr David Drew	David Lepper
James Duddridge	Mrs Madeleine Moon
Patrick Hall	Mr Dan Rogerson
Lynne Jones	Mr Roger Williams

Draft Report [*Bovine TB: badger culling*], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 7 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Several papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

Several papers were ordered to be reported to the House.

***

[Adjourned till Wednesday 29 March at 2.30 p.m.

Witnesses

7 February 2006	*Page*
Professor John Bourne, Chairman, Professor Christl Donnelly, Deputy Chairman, and Dr Rosie Woodroffe, **Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB**, Professor H Charles J Godfray FRS, Chairman, **Independent Scientific Review of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial**, and Dr Chris Cheeseman, **Central Science Laboratory**	Ev 4
Mr Tim Bennett, President, and Mr Meurig Raymond, Vice President, **National Farmers Union** and Mr David Williams, Chairman, and Mr Trevor Lawson, Media Adviser, **Badger Trust**	Ev 26

List of written evidence

1	The Family Farmers' Association (Formerly The Small Farmers' Association) (BTB 01)	Ev 37
2	Central Science Laboratory (BTB 02)	Ev 1
3	Tony Meeuwissen and Marie Gwynn (BTB 03)	Ev 38
4	Mr B Hitchin (BTB 04)	Ev 38
5	National Beef Association (BTB 05)	Ev 39
6	Farmers Union of Wales (BTB 06)	Ev 43
7	Mr A Johnson (BTB 07)	Ev 47
8	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (BTB 08)	Ev 50
9	Miss D Elsey (BTB 09)	Ev 50
10	Association of Meat Inspectors GB Ltd (BTB 10)	Ev 51
11	Mrs W Strickland (BTB 11)	Ev 51
12	M Hancox (BTB 12)	Ev 52
13	F Wakefield (BTB 13)	Ev 58
14	R S P C A (BTB 14)	Ev 59
15	Independent Scientific Group (ISG) (BTB 15)	Ev 1
16	English Nature, on behalf of the Natural England confederation (English Nature and the Rural Development Service) (BTB 16)	Ev 63
17	J Simpson (BTB 17)	Ev 65
18	J Thornton (BTB 18)	Ev 66
19	D J B Denny (BTB 19)	Ev 69
20	National Farmers' Union (NFU) (BTB 20)	Ev 15
21	British Association for Shooting and Conservation's (BASC) (BTB 21)	Ev 74
22	Cornwall Badger Group (BTB 22)	Ev 77
23	Tenant Farmers Association (BTB 23)	Ev 78
24	Wildlife and Countryside Link (BTB 24)	Ev 79
25	League Against Cruel Sports (BTB 25)	Ev 81
26	Country Land and Business Association (BTB 26)	Ev 83
27	Badger Trust (BTB 27)	Ev 18, 33
28	Mrs M Miles (BTB 28)	Ev 87
29	Wildlife Trusts (BTB 29)	Ev 88
30	British Cattle Veterinary Association (BTB 30)	Ev 90
31	British Veterinary Association (BVA) (BTB 31)	Ev 92
32	F Fraser (BTB 32)	Ev 95
33	P Caruana (BTB 33)	Ev 96
34	C Thomas-Everard (BTB 34)	Ev 97
35	West Wales Badger Group (BTB 35)	Ev 103
36	Ben Bradshaw MP, Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (BTB 36)	Ev 104

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons library where they may be inspected by members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London SW1. (Tel 020 7219 3074) hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

British Cattle Veterinary Association (BTB 30) (Appendix)

British Veterinary Association (BVA) (BTB 31) (Appendix)

Christopher Thomas-Everard (BTB 34) notes on Enigma diagnostics equipment

Reports from the Committee since 2003

Session 2005–06		
Fifth Report	Rural Payments Agency: interim report	HC 840
Fourth Report	The Departmental Annual Report 2005	HC 693-I (HC 966 05–06)
Third Report	The Animal Welfare Bill	HC 683
Second Report	Reform of the EU Sugar Regime	HC 585-I (HC 927 05–06)
First Report	The future for UK fishing: Government Response	HC 532
Session 2004–05		
Ninth Report	Climate Change: looking forward	HC 130-I (HC 533 05–06)
Eighth Report	Progress on the use of pesticides: the Voluntary Initiative	HC 258 (HC 534 05–06)
Seventh Report	Food information	HC 469 (HC 437 05–06)
Sixth Report	The future of UK fishing	HC 122 (HC 532 05–06)
Fifth Report	The Government's Rural Strategy and the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill	HC 408-I (Cm 6574)
Fourth Report	Waste policy and the Landfill Directive	HC 102 (Cm 6618)
Third Report	The Work of the Committee in 2004	HC 281
Second Report	Dismantling Defunct Ships in the UK: Government Reply	HC 257
First Report	The draft Animal Welfare Bill	HC 52-I (HC 385)
Session 2003–04		
Nineteenth Report	Water Pricing: follow-up	HC 1186 (HC 490 04–05)
Eighteenth Report	Dismantling of Defunct Ships in the UK	HC 834 (HC 257 04–05)
Seventeenth Report	Agriculture and EU Enlargement	HC 421 (HC 221 04–05)
Sixteenth Report	Climate Change, Water Security and Flooding	HC 558 (HC 101 04–05)
Fifteenth Report	The Departmental Annual Report 2004	HC 707 (HC 100 04–05)
Fourteenth Report	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	HC 475 (HC 1255)
Thirteenth Report	Bovine TB	HC 638 (HC 1130)
Twelfth Report	Reform of the Sugar Regime	HC 550-I (HC 1129)
Eleventh Report	GM Planting Regime	HC 607 (HC 1128)
Tenth Report	Marine Environment: Government reply	HC 706
Ninth Report	Milk Pricing in the United Kingdom	HC 335 (HC 1036)
Eighth Report	Gangmasters (follow up)	HC 455 (HC 1035)
Seventh Report	Implementation of CAP Reform in the UK	HC 226-I (HC 916)
Sixth Report	Marine Environment	HC 76 (HC 706)
Fifth Report	The Food Standards Agency and Shellfish	HC 248 (HC 601)
Fourth Report	Environmental Directives	HC 103 (HC 557)
Third Report	Caught in the net: Cetacean by-catch of dolphins and porpoises off the UK coast	HC 88 (HC 540)
Second Report	Annual Report of the Committee 2003	HC 225
First Report	Water Pricing	HC 121 (HC 420)