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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

34th meeting
Strasbourg, 2-5 December 2014

Complaint in stand-by

**PRESUMED RISK OF NATIONAL EXTINCTION
OF BADGERS (*MELES MELES*) IN ENGLAND
(United Kingdom)**

REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT

*Document prepared by
The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), United Kingdom*



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Ivana d'Alessandro
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
Biological Diversity Unit
F-67075 Strasbourg
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7 February 2014

Dear Ivana

Complaint No.2013/7 on Presumed Risk of National Extinction of Badgers (Meles meles) in England

1. Thank you for your letter of 27 January, regarding the above, to which you attached several complaints regarding the extension of badger culling in England and a presumed lack of clear data on populations.
2. Having looked at these additional complaints I can confirm that there is nothing further I can add to the information I have already provided in my letter of 28 November 2013 and subsequent e-mail of 2 December, in which I confirmed that an Independent Panel of Experts will be considering information collected during the pilot culls in order to inform decisions on a wider roll-out of badger control in those parts of England most severely affected by Bovine TB.
3. I can confirm that Defra has continuously used the best available evidence on the local badger population in the two pilot areas and there is no evidence to suggest any detriment to the survival of the badger population in these areas (which only cover a very small area, some 0.4%, of the total area of England).

Yours sincerely

Dave Wootton
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Ivana d' Alessandro
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November 2013

Dear Ivana

Additional Complaints – UK Badger Cull Extension

1. Thank you for your correspondence informing us that the Secretariat had received a number of e-mails concerned about the culling of badgers in the UK, together with two Complaints relating to the extension of the culling period and a presumed lack of clear data on populations (which the Complainants believe could potentially lead to the extinction of the species).
2. You have confirmed that the Secretariat has yet to assess the grounds for the Complaints and, because the Bureau has yet to screen them, they cannot be submitted to the forthcoming Standing Committee meeting. You have, however, asked for any update we can provide on the latest situation regarding the culling, with particular reference to the decision to extend the cull, in case the subject is raised by NGOs at the meeting (although we note it is not on the agenda).
3. The decision to extend the culling period was taken on the basis that further badgers needed to be culled from a disease control perspective after the initial 6-week period. You will recall that the policy's aim was to remove at least 70% of the total badger population in each area over a 6-week period.
4. Based on the estimates made in October 2013, on the basis of information collected immediately before the start of culling, the following estimates of badgers removed in each area during the initial 6-week period and extensions are given below.

Area	First 6 weeks	Extension period
Somerset	60%	65% (after 3 week extension)
Gloucestershire	30%	tbc (after 8 week extension)*

**Defra will publicly report on progress following conclusion of extension. This report is expected 18th December 2013.*

5. We have placed a number of documents in the public domain on the cull extensions, including the following:
- Secretary of State's statements to Parliament
9 October 2013
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131009/wmstext/131009m0001.htm#13100970000005>
 - 17 October 2013
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131017/wmstext/131017m0001.htm#13101750000005>
 - 5 November 2013
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131105/wmstext/131105m0001.htm#13110571000006>
 - The advice of the UK Chief Veterinary Officer on extending the culling periods (*attached to covering e-mail as a pdf file*)
 - The advice of Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser on badger population estimates in the pilot areas (*attached to covering e-mail as a pdf file*)
6. The pilots add to the evidence that cage trapping and shooting and controlled shooting will not place the UK in breach of the Convention, in particular the requirement in Article 9 that any exemption "will not be detrimental to the survival of the population concerned". In addition to this only 70-80% of the pilot areas are accessible to culling – badgers will therefore also remain in the 20-30% of land in the pilot areas which is not accessible for culling. We have however taken a precautionary approach and monitoring will take place following culling, which will assess badger activity in each licensed area.
7. In addition the following points need to be considered in addition to the information provided above and in response to the Complaints:
- the badger population's natural range stretches across the whole of Great Britain
 - the badger population's conservation status is uniform across this natural range
 - only two areas of England (of a combined c.570km²) are currently subject to culling – this is only 0.4% of the total area of England
 - if the policy is rolled out more widely, culling would only take place in control areas within the High Risk Area¹ of England (where the TB situation in cattle is worse)
8. If there is any further information that you require then please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Dave Wootton

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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¹ https://consult.defra.gov.uk/farming/tb/supporting_documents/Draft%20%20Strategy.pdf