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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

45th meeting
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Bureau of the Standing Committee

8-10 April 2025
Strasbourg

Complaint on stand-by: 2019/04
Badger Culling Policy in England, United Kingdom

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

Document prepared by
The Born Free Foundation UK, The Badger Trust UK, and Eurogroup For Animals, Brussels

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

T: 03459 335577
helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Mikael Poutiers
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
F-67075
Strasbourg
CEDEX
France

Our ref: 2019/04
Date: 16 January 2025

Dear Mikael Poutiers

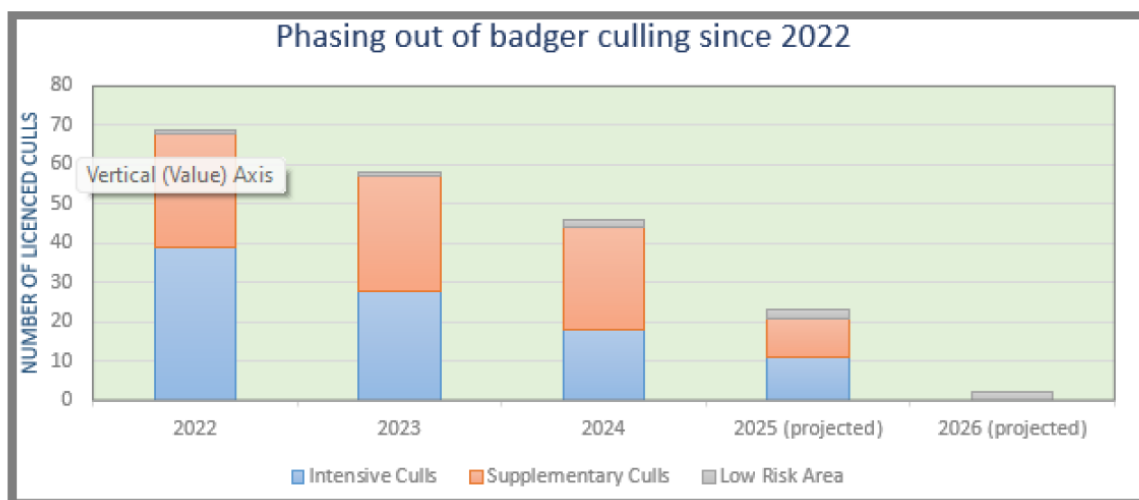
Complaint No. 2019/04: Badger Control Policy in England – INTERIM REPORT

1. As requested by the Bureau, please find an “Interim Report” on the licensed culling of badgers (the “badger control policy”) to prevent the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England, which will clarify the complainant’s confusion regarding the continued phase out of the badger control policy in England.
2. The UK Government’s badger control policy continues to be phased out. No new intensive badger control licences have been issued in the High Risk or Edge areas of England since August 2022. The licensing of both intensive and supplementary badger control therefore remains on a steep downward trajectory, with all remaining licences of these type ending in January 2026. And there remains no policy provision to issue any new licences beyond this date, aside in the Low-Risk Area in response to hotspots of bovine TB (see paragraph 9).
3. The UK Government has decided that it will not be proceeding with proposals consulted on by the previous government on introducing a “targeted badger intervention” policy (see paragraph 10).
4. In July 2024 a new UK Government was elected, and on 30 August, the UK Government announced the start of work on a comprehensive new bovine TB strategy for England and to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament. (see paragraph 11).
5. Additionally, since our previous letter of 28 July 2023, the UK Government’s roll out of badger vaccination in England has continued to accelerate, with further expansions planned.
6. The UK Government continues to fully implement the provisions of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (“the Convention”) with respect to the badger control policy in England and we will provide a more substantive report, as requested by the Bureau, in July 2026.

Update on the badger control policy in England

7. We continue to phase out the badger control policy. No new intensive badger control licences in the High Risk and Edge areas of England have been issued since August 2022. The licensing of both intensive and supplementary badger control is on a steep downward trajectory, with the final round of licence authorisations and badger control taking place in 2025. All remaining licences of this type will then expire in January 2026. This phasing out timeline is unchanged and was clearly set out in our last report.
8. The “new” supplementary badger control licences referred to by the complainant are for existing licences that have completed intensive badger control and were thus eligible to apply for a supplementary badger control licence. As such, they do not represent new geographic areas of badger control, only a continuation beyond the initial four-year intensive badger control period (which in this case is for a maximum of two additional years). This approach is unchanged and remains in line with the phase out plan that was implemented following the UK Government’s 2021 consultation response¹. Figure 1 clearly displays the steep downward trajectory of the current badger control policy from its peak in 2022.

Figure 1: Downward trajectory of the badger control policy.



9. In respect of badger control in the Low-Risk Area, it remains the case that this is licensed only as a last resort, where there is clear evidence of infection in badgers and transmission to cattle. Accordingly, there are only a small number of licences of this type, with only two extant licences in 2024. As with other licences in this risk area, evidence will be reviewed annually, including data on TB prevalence in badgers and cattle, with an aim to end badger culling as soon as possible and in any case, by the end of this Parliament.

Public consultation on introducing a targeted badger intervention policy

10. In relation to the complainant’s references to the public consultation launched under the previous government, which included proposals to introduce a targeted badger intervention policy (targeted badger culling with an exit to badger vaccination). We can confirm that after careful consideration of the responses received to this consultation, the UK Government has decided that it will not be

¹ [Bovine tuberculosis: consultation on proposals to help eradicate the disease in England](#)

proceeding with these proposals. The position at paragraph 2 therefore remains, i.e. there is no policy provision for badger control beyond January 2026, aside in the Low-Risk Area.

11. As referenced in paragraph four, the Bureau will want to be aware that the new UK Government has started work on a comprehensive new bovine TB strategy for England. Working closely alongside farmers, vets, scientists and conservationists to rapidly strengthen and deploy a range of disease control measures, the UK Government will also:
 - a) Undertake a national badger population survey, commencing this winter, to provide an improved estimate of badger abundance and population recovery.
 - b) Develop a new national wildlife TB surveillance programme to provide an up-to-date understanding of disease in badgers and other wildlife (such as deer).
 - c) Establish a new Badger Vaccinator Field Force to increase badger vaccination delivery at pace and create progressively healthier badger populations that are less susceptible to catching and transmitting TB.
12. We look forward to submitting a more detailed report to the bureau in July 2026, especially as we will be in position to update you on further progress in relation to the bTB refresh, particularly on the national badger population survey.



Simon Mackown

Head of Species Recovery

National Biodiversity Division, Defra

+44 (0) 7771 613340