

"Appalling" biosecurity on farms is the true cause of bovine TB spread, says Badger Trust Cymru

Badger Trust Cymru has today called for minimum standards of biosecurity to be a legal requirement on farms in Wales, following the revelation that biosecurity is a "new concept for" and "totally alien to" most farmers.

A new report published by the Welsh Assembly Government[1] reveals that in some cases vets regard biosecurity on farms as "appalling".

It cites one example where a farmer claims to have a "closed herd", but buys cattle from his sister whose herd has bovine TB. When the vet pointed out that the farmer's own TB breakdown could have been caused by cattle from his sister's herd, the farmer was "dumbfounded". The report recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government should examine "how other incentives, such as economic payments, may be used to encourage biosecurity". But Steve Clark, for Badger Trust Cymru, disagrees:

"Why should tax payers be expected to pay farmers to take common sense measures to control the spread of bovine TB amongst cattle? Given that tax payers also compensate farmers for this disease, it's a double whammy. Instead, minimum standards of biosecurity should be a legal requirement, with deductions made from European farm payments if the standards are not implemented."

The report details the results of Wales' 2006-7 Biosecurity Intensive Treatment Area trial. But even the trial has come under attack from Badger Trust Cymru because involvement was entirely voluntary. As a result, farms "specifically ... with high numbers of cattle movements" did not participate, distorting the results.

"Cattle movements have been shown to be the cause of the vast majority of TB outbreaks[2]," commented Steve Clark. "If farms whose business practices put them most at risk are allowed to simply opt out of disease control measures, bovine TB will continue to spread.

That is a completely unacceptable burden on tax payers.

"Moreover, it would be a gross injustice to start slaughtering badgers in Wales when this report makes it clear that biosecurity is a totally alien concept to most farmers. We are simply not prepared to allow Elin Jones to make badgers scapegoats for fundamental failings in the farming industry."

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For further comment, contact Steve Clark on 07867 673054. Mr Clark is available for live interview in Cardiff on Thursday morning.

Alternatively, contact Trevor Lawson on 07976 26388.

1. Enticott, G. (2008), Evaluation of the South West Wales Biosecurity Intensive Treatment Area, Cardiff University. Available online at <http://tinyurl.com/649khl> 2. See, for example, Gilbert, M., et al., Cattle movements and bovine tuberculosis in Great Britain. *Nature*, 2005. 435(26): p. 491-496; and: Carrique-Mas, J.J., et al., Risk of bovine tuberculosis breakdowns in post-foot-and-mouth disease restocked cattle herds in Great Britain. *Proceedings of the Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine*, 2005. Nairn, Inverness 30 March -1 April 2005.

Badger Trust is the only charity solely dedicated to the conservation of badgers across Great Britain.

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