

[Press release: New data shows drop in bovine TB as further measures to fight disease unveiled](#)

Reductions in new outbreaks of bovine TB have been recorded in Gloucestershire and Somerset following the completion of their licensed four-year badger culls, Farming Minister George Eustice has announced.

The data published today shows there has been a decline in TB incidence in the first two cull areas with the rate of new confirmed breakdowns now at about half the level they were before culling began. In the Gloucestershire cull area, TB incidence has fallen from 10.4% before culling started to 5.6% in year four of the cull, while in Somerset it has reduced from 24% to 12%.

The findings are in line with expectation based on the scientific evidence from the Randomised Badger Culling Trial which underpins the approach to tackling bovine TB – and demonstrate progress is being made in delivering the 25-year TB eradication strategy in England to rid our farmers of the impacts of this terrible disease.

In a further move to strengthen the [government's 25-year bTB eradication strategy](#), the Minister of State has also announced the opening of a new round of applications for Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme grants.

[Licences have also been published](#) for badger control in 10 new areas within the High Risk Area, covering parts of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Staffordshire and Gloucestershire, plus one additional licence for badger control in Cumbria to eradicate a pocket of infection in both cattle and badgers in the TB Low Risk Area. Along with six-monthly cattle testing, movement restrictions and good biosecurity on farms, this offers the best opportunity to deal quickly with this localised threat.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Today's figures showing reductions in TB cases in Somerset and Gloucestershire are evidence that our strategy for dealing with this slow moving, insidious disease is delivering results.

Bovine TB remains one of the greatest animal health threats to the UK. There is no single measure that will provide an easy answer which is why we are committed to pursuing a wide range of interventions to protect the future of our dairy and beef industries and eradicate the disease within 20 years.

No one wants to be culling badgers forever so the progress reported today is encouraging.

The Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme, which was suspended for two years following a global vaccine shortage before resuming in 2017, is open for expressions of interest from today with grant funding of up to 50% of costs – worth £700,000 over four years – available to private groups wishing to carry out badger vaccination in the Edge Area.

The scheme, which funded three projects over the course of the past 12 months, aims to create a protected badger population between the High Risk and Low Risk Areas of England and prevent further spread of the disease. New projects would start in spring 2019.

TB data from the eight other cull areas that have held licences for two or three years is also published today. While it is too early to expect to see any drop in those areas, we would hope to see a similar pattern to Somerset and Gloucestershire in coming years. A full scientific paper will be published in due course.

England has the highest incidence of bovine TB in Europe and the disease costs taxpayers over £100million every year. In 2017 more than 33,000 cattle had to be slaughtered in England to control the disease, causing devastation and distress for farmers and rural communities.

Earlier this year the government announced [a review of its 25 year Bovine TB strategy](#). The review, chaired by Sir Charles Godfray, is due to report to ministers at the end of the month.

Chief Vet Christine Middlemiss said:

Taking comprehensive action to prevent bovine TB infection of cattle from the reservoir of disease in local badger populations is an essential part of the government's 25-year strategy to eradicate the disease in England.

Proactive badger control is currently the best available option. Supported by tighter cattle controls including in those areas seeing a reduction in cattle-badger-cattle infection, improved biosecurity and vaccination, the licensing of further areas is necessary to realise disease control benefits across England.

Five years into our 25-year bovine TB eradication strategy it is timely to reflect on the next steps and I look forward to Sir Charles Godfray and his team reporting to ministers later this month.

Read the [licenses and authorisation letters](#).

Read the [data on BT trends](#).

[Research and analysis: Bovine TB: incidence of TB in cattle in licenced badger control areas in 2013 to 2017](#)

This monitoring report provides the annual TB monitoring data and results for each of the badger control licenced areas and their buffer areas up to the end of 2017. New badger control areas will be included in subsequent reports once they have at least one year of follow-up data available.

[Research and analysis: Bovine TB epidemiology and surveillance in Great Britain, 2017](#)

Epidemiology report for England

This report provides detailed analysis and interpretation of the bovine TB epidemic in England in the light of control measures and policy (i.e. the strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis free status for England).

It explains the England control strategy with chapters on:

- the level of TB in England and changes over time
- the characteristics of infected herds
- the effectiveness of surveillance
- the impact of TB and of the control measures
- the effectiveness of controls
- the detailed epidemiology of disease in each risk area.

The data that supports this report is presented in the GB surveillance data report.

Sections reporting on the results of source of infection investigations will be added later in the year once data collection and analysis is completed.

GB surveillance data report

This report provides detailed surveillance data tables and graphics about the status of bovine TB in cattle in England, Scotland and Wales in 2017 and shows some historical trends. The report should be read with the explanatory

supplement.

Maps for TB Spread and Retraction (B11) and Genotype Home Ranges for 2017 (I3 to I5) will be published at a later date to allow for further quality checks to be applied to an updated dataset.

Explanatory supplement to the reports

This has been published to support the GB surveillance data report and the epidemiology report for England.

It explains where the data comes from, methodology used, definitions and control protocols for TB.

The text is taken from the explanatory text published in reports from previous years and is published as a separate reference document to reduce the length of the data and epidemiology.

Guidance: Running an oil or gas business if there's no Brexit deal

If the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 without a deal, find out how this would affect:

- oil and gas licensing, exploration and production
- environmental protection relating to relevant energy sectors
- oil stocking arrangements

Policy paper: Advice to Natural England on setting minimum and maximum numbers of badgers to be controlled in 2018

Defra's advice to Natural England on setting the minimum and maximum numbers of badgers to be controlled in licensed areas during 2018.

The advice covers the 21 existing areas and 11 new areas for 2018. It includes a description of the methods used by Defra for estimating the badger

populations in these areas.