

Press release: Bovine TB strategy review

The government has announced [a review of its 25 year Bovine TB strategy](#) to be chaired by Sir Charles Godfray, a population biologist and Fellow of the Royal Society.

Four years after the 25 year strategy was first published, Environment Secretary Michael Gove has said he believes now is a good time to review progress and consider what additional actions might be necessary now to ensure other tools and interventions are ready to be deployed in later phases of the strategy. The government has said it also envisages future reviews at five yearly intervals.

The 25 year strategy outlined a very broad range of interventions to fight the disease including tighter cattle movement controls and removal of infected cattle from herds, improved diagnostic tests, enhanced biosecurity measures, the culling of badgers in areas where disease is rife, vaccination of badgers and work to develop a viable vaccine for use in cattle.

So far, the principal elements deployed in the first phase of the strategy have been cattle movement controls, the removal of infected cattle from herds and the badger cull which covered more than 20 different areas in 2017. Michael Gove and Farming Minister George Eustice have said they want to ensure other elements of the strategy, such as cattle vaccination or developing genetic resistance, are ready to be deployed in the next phase of the strategy in order to ensure the government maintains progress towards its target of becoming officially TB free by 2038.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Bovine TB is a slow moving, insidious disease which presents many challenges. It is difficult to detect, can be harboured in the wildlife population and no vaccine is fully effective. There is no single measure that will provide an easy answer and that is why we are pursuing a wide range of interventions including cattle movement controls and a cull of badgers in areas where disease is rife.

Now is a good time to review progress to date and identify steps we could take now to accelerate some of the elements of our 25 year strategy that might be deployed in later phases. While the badger culls are a necessary part of the strategy, no one wants to be culling badgers forever.

Bovine TB has a negative effect on the health and welfare of affected animals

and dealing with the disease costs the taxpayer an estimated £100 million a year. Over the last year alone more than 30,000 infected cattle had to be slaughtered in England.

The [review's Terms of Reference](#) are available.

The review is due to end in September 2018. The findings will be submitted to Defra Ministers for consideration and a final report published in due course.