

Reference Number : DAERA/26-798



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

**Veterinary Service Animal Health Group**  
Information Communication Branch

[REDACTED]

Via Email:

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22 October 2026

Dear [REDACTED],

### **Environmental Information Regulation 2004**

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 08 October 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm we hold the information requested.

### **Concerns regarding the proposed badger culling**

***I strongly object to the killing of badgers and would ask DAERA to explain why culling is considered an appropriate option.***

***I would particularly like clarification on:***

#### ***1. What evidence demonstrates that badgers are a significant cause of bovine TB transmission in Northern Ireland?***

The Department put an Annotated scientific bibliography - badger intervention - bTB - 2015 to November 2024 into the public domain as part of the consultation papers on Potential Wildlife Intervention Options as part of the bTB in NI: Blueprint for Eradication to seek

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views. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-potential-wildlife-intervention-options-part-bovine-tuberculosis-northern-ireland-blueprint-eradication>. This provides the evidence on the role of badgers in disease maintenance and spread.

**2. What proportion of TB cases in cattle can be directly attributed to badgers?**

There is no consensus on this matter. Research papers differ in their methodologies and conclusions. The Department put an annotated scientific bibliography into the public domain as part of the consultation papers on potential wildlife intervention options as part of the bTB in NI: Blueprint for Eradication to seek views.

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-potential-wildlife-intervention-options-part-bovine-tuberculosis-northern-ireland-blueprint-eradication>

**3. What methodology was used to establish this relationship?**

As above.

**4. How many cases or samples were analysed?**

As above.

**5. What were the findings of this research?**

As above.

**6. How statistically significant and independently verified are these findings?**

All papers which form part of the Annotated scientific bibliography - badger intervention - bTB - 2015 to November 2024 have been peer reviewed.

**7. What alternative, non-lethal interventions were considered before culling was proposed?**

They have not been rejected and vaccination only options were consulted upon <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-potential-wildlife-intervention-options-part-bovine-tuberculosis-northern-ireland-blueprint-eradication>.

**8. Why were those alternatives rejected?**

They have not been rejected and vaccination only options were consulted upon.

**9. What evidence demonstrates that culling will be more effective than alternative approaches?**

Research papers suggest deeper coverage over a longer period for a vaccination only approach. This information can be found in the consultation documents.

**10. What measures will be implemented to ensure that other wildlife species are not harmed or displaced as a consequence of the operation?**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out and consulted upon as part of the Potential wildlife Intervention Options as part of the bTB in NI: Blueprint for Eradication

exercise. Details on each potential wildlife intervention and impacts / mitigations are in this document.

***I would also like clarification regarding the potential ecological consequences.***

***Badgers form part of Northern Ireland's natural ecosystems.***

- ***What assessment has been made of the ecological role of badgers and the potential consequences of significantly reducing their population?***

An SEA was carried out which looks at these potential impacts in NI. This can be found at the consultation link provided above.

***In particular:***

- ***What ecosystems and food chains depend upon badgers?***

As above.

- ***What impact could removing badgers have on other species?***

As above.

- ***Could the removal of badgers create ecological imbalances?***

As above.

- ***How will habitats be monitored before, during and after the proposed operation?***

Should any wildlife intervention be taken forward, the Department will put appropriate monitoring arrangements in place.

- ***What environmental impact assessment has been undertaken?***

An SEA and Habitats Regulations assessment (HRA) was carried out. The screening appraisal for the HRA concluded that the possibility for Likely Significant Effects arising from adoption of the 'Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication and implementation' Plan and implementation of its associated 'Wildlife Intervention Options' can be excluded. The SEA was proceeded at the Departments request.

- ***What preventative measures will be used to minimise unintended consequences for other wildlife?***

Should any wildlife intervention be taken forward, the Department will put appropriate mitigations in place.

- ***Could the proposed approach contribute to habitat degradation or other environmental impacts?***

An SEA was carried out which looks at these potential impacts in Northern Ireland.

**Public money and value for money**

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***I understand that information relating to the costs of badger culling has been published. However, I would like greater transparency regarding the total anticipated cost of the programme, including administration, staffing, equipment, monitoring, communications and environmental assessment.***

***I would also like to know:***

- ***How much public money has been allocated to the proposed programme?***

None to date for wildlife intervention, although each potential wildlife intervention option did undergo an options analysis. The Badger intervention Options analysis paper is included in the consultation documentation along with a Badger Intervention Analyses - calculation assumptions paper.

- ***How much has already been spent?***

No operational expenditure has been incurred as no wildlife intervention has taken place here.

- ***What is the estimated total cost?***

The Badger intervention Options analysis paper is included in the consultation documentation along with a Badger Intervention Analyses - calculation assumptions paper.

- ***How much has been spent on producing promotional or informational material relating to the programme?***

There is no wildlife intervention programme at present. The cost of advertising the consultation in Belfast Telegraph and Irish news £1833.70.

- ***What proportion of the budget has been allocated to researching or implementing non-lethal alternatives?***

As above not applicable.

- ***Has the cost-effectiveness of non-lethal approaches been independently assessed? If public money is being used to kill wildlife, I believe taxpayers are entitled to understand why this is considered the best available use of those resources.***

No. The Badger intervention Options analysis paper was prepared by the Department.

### **DAERA's communications and public awareness**

***I am also concerned about the visibility and accessibility of information regarding this issue.***

***I became aware of the proposed approach through the Northern Ireland Badger Group rather than through DAERA's own communications. This raises questions***

***about how effectively DAERA is communicating important wildlife-management decisions to the public.***

- ***Why was information about this proposal not more widely communicated?***

Different avenues were used to raise awareness, and these include advertising in the Belfast Telegraph and Irish News along with notifications to Stakeholder groups and section 75 groups. The Department also issued press releases and used social media channels to raise awareness of the consultation.

- ***What efforts has DAERA made to ensure that members of the public are aware of the proposal and have an opportunity to understand and respond to it?***

As above.

***I would recommend that DAERA improve its public communications by:***

- ***Establishing a more active TikTok presence to reach younger demographics.***
- ***Increasing its use of Instagram and other social media platforms.***
- ***Providing clear, accessible explanations of wildlife-management policies.***
- ***Ensuring all links on social media profiles and posts work correctly.***
- ***Improving the accessibility and reliability of online information.***
- ***Considering verification of official social-media accounts so the public can easily identify genuine DAERA information.***
- ***Increasing the amount of content relating to wildlife conservation rather than disproportionately focusing on other environmental topics.***

***I have also noticed inconsistencies or issues with some links associated with DAERA's social-media content. Please see the attached image demonstrating this issue.***

### **Consistency in DAERA's treatment of animals**

***I was particularly concerned by the contrast between DAERA's messaging around animal welfare and its support for killing wild animals.***

***For example, the World Animal Day content appeared to place significant emphasis on caring for domestic animals, while at the same time the proposed killing of thousands of wild animals is being promoted.***

***I find this extremely distressing and, from an animal-welfare perspective, contradictory.***

***Whether an animal is a companion animal, livestock or wildlife, it is still a living being capable of experiencing suffering. I do not believe that an animal's value should depend upon its relationship with humans.***

***As a vegan, I do not eat animals, wear animal-derived products, use animals for entertainment or knowingly purchase products tested on animals. It is therefore extremely frustrating to see public money potentially being used to fund the killing of wildlife.***

***If an equivalent proposal involved large numbers of cats or dogs, I believe there would understandably be significant public opposition. I therefore ask why the same level of consideration is not given to wild animals such as badgers.***

### **TB prevention and responsibility**

***I would also like clarification regarding the responsibility placed on farmers and livestock producers for disease prevention.***

- ***Why are farmers not expected to take greater responsibility for biosecurity and disease-control measures on their own farms where practical?***

Farmers are expected to take responsibility for biosecurity and disease control measures and information can be found in the TB Portal <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/tuberculosis-tb-portal>.

- ***What preventative measures are currently available to farmers?***

A website link to advise farmers on preventative measures and how to ensure good biosecurity can be found in the TB Portal at [TB Biosecurity | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#).

- ***How effective are these measures?***

TB is a multi-factorial disease; it is not possible to quantify the effectiveness of each individual measure as disease control measures are not deployed separately.

- ***What evidence demonstrates that the proposed wildlife intervention is necessary in addition to existing cattle-focused disease-control measures?***

The balance of the scientific research finds that badgers are vectors of bTB and contribute to the maintenance and spread of the disease - please see the Annotated scientific bibliography - badger intervention - bTB - 2015 to November 2024 as outlined in response to earlier questions.

- ***I would also like DAERA to explain the scientific basis for the recommendations outlined in the DAERA social-media content published on 22 September 2026.***

If you are referring to the consultation on Potential Wildlife Intervention Options as part of the bTB in NI: Blueprint for Eradication, then the Annotated scientific bibliography - badger intervention - bTB - 2015 to November 2024 and DAERA scientific opinion paper on the peer reviewed evidence on badger intervention in relation to the control of bovine tuberculosis, alongside the other documents released as part of the consultation exercise.

### **Research and evidence**

***I would welcome greater transparency regarding the research underpinning the proposed policy.***

***Please provide information regarding:***

- ***The research methodology used.***

This will depend on the individual characteristics of each research paper within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***The number of animals, farms or cases included in relevant studies.***

This will depend on the individual characteristics of each research paper within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***The geographical areas examined.***

This will depend on the individual characteristics of each research paper within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***The duration of the research.***

This will depend on the individual characteristics of each research paper within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***The findings and statistical significance.***

This will depend on the individual characteristics of each research paper within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***Any independent peer review.***

All research papers within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024 have been peer reviewed.

- ***Any conflicting scientific evidence considered by DAERA.***

All research papers contained within the Annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024 have been peer reviewed and published within the period outlined. The bibliography does include papers whose findings may be seen as contradictory.

- ***The evidence supporting the conclusion that badger culling is necessary and proportionate.***

The Department has not determined that badger culling is necessary as vaccination only options have been consulted upon. The evidence supporting all consulted upon wildlife intervention options can be found within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024 and other consultation documentation.

- ***The evidence regarding the effectiveness of non-lethal alternatives.***

This research papers on vaccination only can be found within the annotated scientific bibliography – badger intervention – bTB – 2015 to November 2024.

- ***I would also like to understand why conservation messaging relating to sharks and rays, such as the 17 September 2026 content, appears to receive attention while the protection of Northern Ireland's native terrestrial wildlife appears comparatively limited.***

An SEA was carried out as part of this exercise (can be found on consultation link provided).

***I am not suggesting that one species is more deserving of protection than another. Rather, I believe DAERA should communicate consistently about the protection and conservation of all wildlife.***

#### **Environmental responsibilities**

***Finally, I would appreciate an explanation of how DAERA reconciles the environmental responsibilities represented in its name with policies involving the removal of native wildlife.***

***If DAERA is responsible for agriculture, environment and rural affairs, environmental considerations should, in my view, be central to decisions involving wildlife management.***

***I would therefore ask:***

- ***What environmental impact assessment has been conducted?***

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out and consulted upon.

- ***What consideration has been given to biodiversity?***

This was considered as part of the SEA.

- ***What consideration has been given to ecosystem balance?***

This was considered as part of the SEA.

- ***Could the proposed operation have indirect effects on other species?***

This was considered as part of the SEA.

- ***Could it affect habitats or contribute to environmental degradation?***

This was considered as part of the SEA.

- ***How will these impacts be monitored?***

Mitigations were considered as part of the SEA.

***I would also like clarification regarding the relevant provisions of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order and other applicable wildlife-protection legislation. How does DAERA ensure that the proposed approach remains consistent with its statutory responsibilities towards wildlife?***

An SEA was carried out. Any intervention will comply with existing or any new legislation.

### **Information request**

***I would appreciate a detailed response to the questions above and, where possible, links to the scientific research, environmental assessments, costings and policy documents on which these decisions have been based.***

***I would also like to request information regarding the cost of producing the relevant DAERA promotional video/content, including the source of funding for its production. If this information is not already publicly available, please advise whether it can be requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.***

The production of social media material is carried out by Department officials and is a business-as-usual function.

***I believe the public deserves transparency regarding decisions that involve the expenditure of public money and the killing of Northern Ireland's wildlife.***

***I strongly encourage DAERA to reconsider lethal wildlife-management approaches and to prioritise research, prevention, conservation and non-lethal alternatives wherever scientifically and practically possible.***

***As a citizen of Northern Ireland, I expect wildlife-protection legislation and DAERA's environmental responsibilities to be taken seriously. I would therefore appreciate a full and evidence-based response to the concerns raised above.***

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

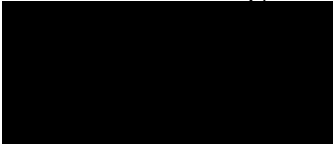
If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing [daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk) or by post at The Department of Agriculture,

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Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,



**Veterinary Service Animal Health Group**

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