

Establishing and running a badger culling training course and assessing competence: minimum course requirements

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Introduction

1. Government policy is to allow the granting of licenses under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to enable a cull of badgers for the purpose of controlling bovine tuberculosis in cattle. Natural England (NE) is the licensing authority and will grant licences subject to strict criteria and licence conditions. In order to obtain a licence, operators will be required to attend an approved training course and demonstrate competence. Industry organisations will be responsible for applying for and running a training course. Government will be responsible for approving the content of the course and auditing courses which are being run.
2. Government will assess the applications to run the course, and where courses are of an appropriate standard, approve training courses for the culling of badgers. This document gives details of the modular syllabus and topics which must be included in a training course and the information that must be submitted to Defra to gain approval. This document should be read in conjunction with the Best Practice Guidance (BPG) on the controlled shooting, and cage-trapping and shooting of badgers. Not all attendees will require training and assessment on all modules of the course. This will depend on which methods they wish to use in conjunction with the licence provided by NE. It should be made clear which modules of the course are required in order to demonstrate competence in a) controlled shooting with a rifle, b) controlled shooting with a shotgun, and c) cage trapping and shooting of cage trapped badgers. Attendees may choose to do the modules for one or more of these methods.

Applications to run a course

3. Applications, setting out the design of the training course should be made to Defra, and are open to all who wish to run badger culling training courses. The following information must be provided in order to be considered for approval:
 - a. Details of all those involved in providing the training and assessing of attendees, including their relevant experience/knowledge/qualifications and role they will fulfil;
 - b. Details of the location of the course and the facilities provided;
 - c. Training materials and resources to be used and provided;
 - d. The maximum number of attendees per course;
 - e. Details of assessments to be carried out, pass standards and the process for dealing with any person failing the assessment;
 - f. Details of arrangements for recording and certification for confirming successful completion of the course. This is to enable Natural England to validate licences to cull badgers.

Course approval process

4. Approval for a training course will remain valid for 4 years, unless this is terminated as a result of auditing and checks, or if changes are made to the policy. The process will be as follows:
 - a. Application to run a course together with all required documents submitted to Defra;
 - b. Defra reviews applications (this may take up to 4 weeks);
 - c. Approval granted by Secretary of State to run courses for successful applications; and
 - d. Defra will review delivery of approved courses.

Course aims

5. The overall aim of the course must be to provide those attending with the necessary knowledge and understanding needed to allow them to pass the assessments for the modules they have taken and ensure that those passing the assessments have the necessary knowledge, understanding and competence to ensure they are capable of taking, killing and disposing of badgers safely, lawfully and humanely by the method(s) covered by the modules they are being assessed for. The course must do this by:
 - a. Providing attendees with the required information to ensure they have adequate knowledge of Defra/NE guidance, all relevant legislation, health and safety, planning and preparation, badger ecology and physiology, firearms handling, the permitted culling methods, carcass handling and disposal, and record keeping;
 - b. Testing attendees' knowledge and understanding of the above through a formal assessment;
 - c. Testing the attendees' marksmanship and related skills (for rifle shooting and shotguns), including target recognition, distance judging, assessing safe shot/backstop through a practical test which mimics key components of circumstances under which a real cull might take place, including outside in a rural setting at night time.

Course content

6. The following section sets out the content that the training course must contain.

Relevant Legislation

7. Relevant legislation and penalties for offence must be detailed. This includes:
 - a. Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (concerning the disturbance and taking/killing of badgers, and interference with badger setts);
 - b. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (concerning the use of prohibited methods, including traps and artificial lighting);

- c. Animal Welfare Act 2006 (concerning the treatment of animals under the control of man);
- d. Relevant Firearms legislation.

Criteria for Obtaining a Licence

8. The course must clearly explain the criteria which applicants must satisfy in order to obtain a licence and the reasons for these. The criteria are set out in the guidance to NE. www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13692-bovinetb-guidance-ne.pdf

Licence Conditions

9. Key licence conditions must be set out and the reasons behind them explained. These should include as a minimum:
- a. Dates of closed seasons and permitted cull period;
 - b. The types and circumstances of use of the different firearms permitted;
 - c. Achieving the minimum reduction of the local badger population;
 - d. The need to prevent the local disappearance of badgers (as stated in the Bern Convention);
 - e. Adherence to the Best Practice Guidance, and the welfare costs of not doing so;
 - f. Keeping and providing accurate and up-to-date records of activities.

Health and Safety

10. The health and safety of licensed operators and the public is of the highest priority. Measures to minimise risks should be covered by the course. These should include as a minimum:
- a. Safe handling of weapons and ammunition;
 - b. An understanding of the need for at least two people when night shooting;
 - c. Measures to take in case of injury/emergency;
 - d. Use of communication devices in case of injury/emergency;
 - e. Hygiene and biosecurity measures. Operators must understand the risks of infection associated with bovine TB. Therefore, a basic explanation of zoonosis is required together with the need for biosecurity measures. This should include as a minimum:
 - i. Wearing suitable clothing with non-porous footwear;
 - ii. Disinfecting these and any equipment before and after each culling activity;
 - iii. The need to have a bucket and brush in order to apply an approved disinfectant (e.g. FAM 30);
 - iv. Where to obtain approved disinfectants and how to handle these safely.
 - f. Handling potential conflict and protesters (see also paragraph 16)

Planning and Preparation for a Cull

11. The course must outline the planning and preparation required in advance of culling commencing. This should cover as a minimum:
 - a. Identifying, referencing and recording location of culling area and identifying and classification of setts;
 - b. Assessing environment (safety constraints, terrain, crop cover, weather and access routes);
 - c. Communicating with authorities and relevant individuals;
 - d. Preparing for opposition to culling activities;
 - e. Obtaining all necessary equipment;
 - f. Understanding the need for good coordination and likely resource levels to achieve the aim of the cull within 6 weeks, and how this can be achieved.

12. Further details on the recommended content for planning and preparation are included at Annex A.

Badger Ecology and Behaviour

13. It is essential that operators have a good understanding of badger ecology in order to maximise the success of taking/killing badgers while avoiding the trapping and/or shooting of other animals. The course must detail methods to identify setts, runs, tracks and latrines and how to differentiate between signs of badgers and other animals, such as foxes.

14. The course must detail the characteristics of badger behaviour, how these differ from other animals and how they can be used to maximise the success of the cull. This should cover as a minimum:
 - a. Social structure of badgers;
 - b. Foraging behaviour;
 - c. Ranging behaviour;
 - d. Badgers' senses and, in particular, behaviour in response to smell, noise and light.

Firearms Law and Safe Handling

15. Operators must be aware of Firearms law and the required amendments to the conditions of Firearms Certificates if authorised to be a licensed operator for badger culling.

16. Safety measures, in particular knowing when it is safe (or not) to take a shot, as well as awareness of people in the vicinity and possible interference from protesters, should be reiterated to operators. The target animal must be identified with certainty and the background must be safe with a wide margin for error.

Controlled Shooting (rifles and shotguns)

Site choice

17. The course must outline the procedure for choosing a bait/shooting site. This must include as a minimum:
- Surveying an area and selecting suitable baiting and shooting locations;
 - Shooting safety considerations including the need for safe backstops and scanning the area for non-targets prior to shooting;
 - How to maximise chances of badgers being attracted to the bait site;
 - Reasons for not shooting at or within the specified distance of setts;
 - Minimising unwanted attention;
 - Using natural vantage points.

Baiting

18. With regards to using a bait station, the course must detail techniques for:
- Laying bait including pre-baiting;
 - Assessing whether badgers or other animals are taking the bait.

Lamping

19. The course must explain the technique, regulations and conditions concerning the use of artificial lighting. This includes:
- The need for landowner's permission when shooting (preferably in writing);
 - Practical application of lamping;
 - The need for additional people when using artificial light;
 - Clarity on who must be licensed according to the tasks carried out;
 - Prohibited, authorised (licensed) and allowed (no specific licence needed) methods of taking/killing badgers;

Use of Night Vision Equipment

20. The course must explain the technique, regulations and conditions concerning the use of night vision (NV) equipment. This includes:
- Use at a range of no more than 60m over a fixed bait station, which is known to be a safe, secure shooting location;
 - Use from a fixed, preferably elevated, shooting position;
 - Only Generation 2 or 3 Night Vision equipment with IR illumination must be used as a rifle scope (or comparable digital NV equipment with IR); and
 - A separate NV spotting device (also with IR illumination) and/or lamp must be used by a second person to scan the wider area for unexpected non-targets, e.g. livestock and members of the public.

It follows that night shooting using Night Vision equipment, as with use of a spotlight and rifle, will also require a minimum team of two people.

Dispatch

21. There must be a full explanation of shooting technique and shot placement. This includes:

- a. Methods of approaching badgers according to wind and light conditions;
- b. Consideration of multiple badgers at bait points and risk of wounding
- c. An explanation of the relevant basic anatomy of badgers;
- d. Target area for a rapid and humane kill when shooting from the ground and from an elevated position;
- e. Dealing with injured badgers;
- f. Reaction to shot;
- g. Follow-up of badgers believed to be shot or wounded that move away.

Cage-trapping and Shooting

Site Choice

22. The course must outline the procedure for choosing a trapping/shooting site. This must include as a minimum:

- a. The correct techniques for a pre-trapping survey and selecting suitable trapping/shooting locations;
- b. How to maximise chances of badgers being attracted to the trap site;
- c. Shooting safety considerations (badgers would be shot on site in the traps so the site needs to be suitable for both trapping and shooting in the trap);
- d. Minimising unwanted attention;
- e. Recognition and avoidance of sites exposed to extremes of weather (e.g. flooding).

Trap Placement

23. The course must detail where and how to place traps at the chosen site. This is to ensure the following:

- a. Traps are stable (e.g. won't roll over/down a slope);
- b. Bedding-in traps effectively;
- c. Minimising exposure to weather;
- d. Suitable access all round, allowing a variety of safe shooting angles/positions.

Setting Traps to Catch

24. The course must ensure a good understanding of techniques for setting and using a trap and practical hands on demonstration. The course must outline information concerning the following points as a minimum:

- a. How to decide on the number of traps that should be used;
- b. Acceptable ways of preventing traps from catching (wiring open etc) during pre-baiting;
- c. Knowing when to stop pre-baiting and set traps to catch;

- d. How to 'string up' a trap;
- e. Causes of 'false catches' (trap sprung nothing caught) and remedies (e.g. weather/wet string);
- f. What to do if there are no/few catches;
- g. Knowing when to stop trapping at a site.

25. Further details on the recommended content concerning trap placement can be found at Annex A.

Baiting

26. With regards to baiting, the course must detail techniques for:
- a. Bait choice and options;
 - b. Laying bait including pre-baiting;
 - c. Assessing whether badgers or other animals are taking the bait;
 - d. What to do if bait is not taken.

Dispatch

27. To ensure that badgers are killed humanely the course must establish how to dispatch animals in a humane way when trapping. The course must provide a full explanation of shooting technique and shot placement. This includes:
- a. An explanation of the relevant basic anatomy of badgers;
 - b. How to position the trapped badger in a good shooting position (use of wickets etc);
 - c. Target area for a rapid and humane kill;
 - d. Considerations of mesh size and gun barrel size and how this may limit shooting angles/positions;
 - e. Difficult or unexpected situations and the actions to take (e.g. if more than one badger is caught or if a badger becomes agitated; action to take if the first shot does not kill).
28. Operators must be made aware that only frangible ammunition fired from a shotgun may be used for cage-trapping according to licence conditions and the reason for this. The procurement of this specialised ammunition (e.g. through the license coordinator) should be discussed.

Non-target Animals

29. The course must make attendees aware that animals other than badgers may be caught in traps and that these could include domestic pets, wild animals that are protected and must be released unharmed, wild animals that can be killed or released, and wild animals whose release is prohibited by law. In addition it is possible that an animal that would otherwise be released might be injured to the extent that to do so would not be humane. If this were the case, for a domestic animal, veterinary care must be considered. Operators should seek detailed guidance on these matters outside the course if their knowledge on the matter is lacking.

Overview of non-target Scenarios

30. While the course must make attendees aware of the need to prepare for these eventualities prior to the start of trapping, the course does not need to cover details of how to deal with non-target species in each instance, but a brief overview such as is given below is recommended.
31. The following animals can be provided as examples of those that may be encountered:
- People's property e.g. domestic dogs and cats (must be released or given veterinary care if needed);
 - Unprotected animals e.g. Foxes (may be released or humanely killed);
 - Protected animals e.g. Pine Marten (must be released if injury is not life threatening or given veterinary care if needed);
 - Non-native species e.g. Grey Squirrels (non-native and must not be released);
 - Birds - A variety of birds may also enter traps. All wild birds are protected; although some may be killed under licence for certain purposes and some cannot be released without an appropriate licence.

Carcase Handling and Disposal

Assessment of Death

32. The course must outline the procedure for an effective assessment and confirmation of death, for both control methods. This includes the signs that operators must identify, including checks for specific body and muscle movements followed by the correct method for carcase handling and disposal according to the Best Practice Guidance.

Infected Material

33. The course must explain the 'Category 1' classification of all waste material from or in contact with a badger carcase and the resulting requirements for carcase disposal.

Storage and Removal

34. The course must outline the process for removing and storing a carcase. This must include as a minimum:
- An outline of the correct equipment which licensed operators should obtain in line with the Best Practice Guidance. This includes appropriate clothing and footwear, suitable bags and labels;
 - Details of the placement of carcasses in the relevant bags and the correct method for closing bags as explained in the Best Practice Guidance;

- c. The process for storing carcasses and their collection in line with animal by-products regulations;
- d. An understanding of the full disposal process for carcase and waste material, including disease and safety considerations.

Record Keeping

- 35. An explanation of what information should be recorded, how and the frequency of recording should be provided. Reporting details will be provided by Natural England.

Course assessment

- 36. All individuals must be assessed on the theory and a night time shooting assessment to ensure that they demonstrate a sufficient level of knowledge, understanding and competence. Evidence of successful completion of the course will be necessary before any attendee can carry out badger control under a badger culling licence. Attendees may retake the theory test one more time on the same day but with different questions. Attendees are expected to pass the night time shooting assessment first time. Only in exceptional circumstances may the person retake the shooting test on another night subject to the assessor's judgement. The assessor's judgement may be assisted by assessing the placement of shots within an outer ring of the target area. Any retakes must be recorded detailing reasons for failure. Any person who fails both the theory test and the shooting test on their second attempt must retake the whole course.

Written Theory Test

- 37. Attendees are required to pass a written test on the different modules of the course (e.g. a multiple choice questionnaire) at the end of the training course. In seeking Defra approval for the course, an example test, and a retake test and details of the proposed pass mark should be provided.

Marksmanship Competency Assessment (rifles and shotguns at night)

- 38. The course must cover details on marksmanship that include
 - i) Judgement of distances: this must cover judging distances from vantage points to possible bait station sites and/or between the 'shooter' and 'target' to mimic controlled shooting situations; night judgements must involve judging distances to badger shaped 'targets' (using artificial light e.g. spot lamp). The assessments must include distances, 'in range', 'out of range too far', and 'out of range too near';

- ii) Discussing shooting of badger-shaped targets placed in different locations (simulating scenarios to demonstrate safety considerations, both safe and unsafe) in the field;
- iii) Safe working practice in relation to night shooting:
 - Demonstrate safe handling techniques
 - Negotiate field obstacles as necessary
 - Assess factors to ensure safe shot
 - Assess factors that could result in unsafe shot
 - Assess/define ricochet risk
 - Assess/define adequate back stop

The rifle test (with and without night vision equipment)

39. The proper condition, accuracy and zeroing of firearms, telescopic sights and other shooting equipment must be checked in daylight, before any night shooting is undertaken. An operator will not be granted a licence to cull badgers either using a lamp and/or night vision equipment unless they have passed the relevant tests. Attendees may take up to five shots to prepare for the test. The test must include:

- a) A rifle/ammunition combination that complies with the Best Practice Guidance. This need not be the exact combination that an individual might choose to use, but must be within the bounds of what is legal for shooting badgers and NE are likely to licence;
- b) The test must be carried out in the dark with the target illuminated by a lamp to simulate shooting at night with an artificial light (lamping) and/or using night vision equipment as appropriate;
- c) The test consists of taking 3 shots at a predefined, clearly marked, 3" (7.5cm) diameter circular target at a range of 70m (60m with night vision equipment). After the 5 preparation shots referred to above, only 3 shots will be allowed for the test. All 3 shots must be in the 3" circular target for the shooter to pass the test;
- d) If two shots are within the 3" target circle and one shot is outside, but within a 4" (10cm) diameter circle of the centre of the target, then although this counts as a 'fail', the assessor has the discretion to allow the shooter to re-take the shooting assessment, but does not have to. It is up to the judgement of the assessor;
- e) Any re-test must be taken on another day, allowing the shooter the opportunity to practice in between. Only one re-take will be allowed;
- f) If more than one shot is outside the 3" circle, or any shot is outside the 4" circle, then a re-test will not be allowed.

The targets card and/or photograph must be stored as evidence of competence. An attendee who fails may seek a retest the following year after seeking further training.

The shotgun test

40. The proper condition, chamber length and proofing of shotguns, consistent with the cartridges and loads to be used, must be checked in daylight, before any night shooting is undertaken. Attendees wishing to use a shotgun must be provided with both modules below:

Patterning a shotgun:

- 1) be shown a practical demonstration of how to pattern test a shotgun;
- 2) show the tutor they understand:
 - a) how to pattern test a shotgun and ammunition combination to achieve hitting a 3" target at the 10m range;
 - b) the importance of this test;
 - c) how to use the pattern test to select a suitable gun/ barrel/ammunition combination for hitting a 3" target at 10m.

Attendees do not actually have to pattern test a shotgun on the course, but following the practical demonstration the tutor has to be convinced that they understand how to perform the test and are capable of interpreting the results and using them to select an appropriate gun/barrel.

Shotgun: practical shooting test

- a) Attendees must be tested on their ability to hit a target with a shotgun at 10 m distance;
- b) This should be tested by taking a shot at three different static targets i.e. 1st shot at target 1, 2nd shot at target 2 and 3rd shot at target 3. Each target must be at least 30cm x 30cm and contain at its centre a predefined, clearly marked 3" (7.5cm) circle. The targets must be positioned a minimum of 1.2 metres (4 foot) apart. To pass the test the 3" circle of each target will, in the judgement of the assessor, be properly within the pattern of shot and one or more shotgun pellets must hit the 3" circle on all of the 3 targets;
- c) The test must be carried out in the dark with the target illuminated by a lamp to simulate shooting at night with an artificial light (lamping);
- d) The shotgun (12 bore shotgun) must be used with either full, three quarter or half choke and the ammunition used must be AAA or BB shot;
- e) The shotgun test may be carried out on the same range as the rifle test.

The targets card and/or photograph must be stored as evidence of competence.

It is not necessary to include a test for the use of a shotgun to shoot cage trapped badgers as this would be at close range (6"/15cm). However, the training course must provide a

practical demonstration of how shooting should be undertaken through a cage (without firing) and test understanding of the practicalities involved.

Those arranging the course may wish to refer to existing fox shooting courses.

Course organisation

41. The management and resources necessary for the effective running of the training course must be considered. This section details the necessary arrangements.

Tutors

42. Suitably qualified tutors will be required to present the different sections of the course. Organisations running the training course will be responsible for contracting the appropriate experts to deliver the course. Relevant information regarding the proposed tutors must be provided to Defra to secure approval for the course. Further details are provided at Annex C.

Facilities/Location

43. It is important that safe locations with appropriate facilities are used for the delivery of the training course and competence assessment. Details should be provided alongside the application for approval.

Security

44. Details of measures to protect the identity of attendees and tutors must be provided, including how records will be held and protected.

Transfer of information

45. Training course documentation and material should be clear and easy to understand, using illustrations and images where possible to complement information.

Training Materials and Resources

46. The duration of the course and the maximum number of participants must be stated.

Government monitoring of the course

47. The training course will be audited by independent experts appointed by Government. The course may also be attended by representatives from Defra and/or NE.

48. As part of the reporting procedure, Defra will require a report on how many courses have been run and the attendance for each, and number of attendees passing/failing/re-takes. Details of the frequency and delivery of these reports will be provided alongside approval to run a course.

Course Changes

49. Substantive changes to the approved course including, the content, assessments, experts/tutors and security arrangements must be agreed in writing with Defra before they are introduced. In order to gain approval, changes must be reviewed and accepted by Government. The duration of the approval process cannot be clearly determined as this depends on the number and extent of the changes proposed, but Defra will aim to ensure it is completed without unnecessary delay.

List of annexes

- A** Further detail on the content of a badger culling training course
- B** Further detail on the assessments for a badger culling training course
- C** Course tutors

Annex A - Recommended details concerning planning and preparation prior to culling

This document provides recommendations of further details to provide as part of the training course.

1. Map surveying and referencing – A map of the local area should be provided by tutors as part of the course. Tutors may demonstrate how to identify and mark a hypothetical culling area on the map. The specific area where culling would take place can then be identified and training provided in the reading and use of ordnance survey grid references. The reason for references must be explained – i.e. these allow operators to provide the relevant authorities and other individuals with the exact coordinates of location prior to culling in case of emergency and may be included in operators' activity reports. Accessible meeting points could be agreed and a list of recommended parties to contact in case of emergency may be provided. This should include the following:
 - The local police
 - The on-call vet
 - Natural England
 - Relevant landowners for land within and bordering the culling area
 - Any other persons defined by Natural England that need to be informed
2. The use of ordnance survey maps to help operators to assess the terrain of the culling area and identify potential risks prior to culling such as public rights of way and access routes, nearby livestock and hazards should be demonstrated.
3. Weather assessment – a review of the weather conditions which may affect the terrain and access to a planned culling area. Circumstances in which this might lead to postponing a planned culling operation should be discussed, including particular relevance to trapping activities.
4. Disruption by protesters – operators must be aware that protesters and individuals opposed to culling may interfere with their activities. The course must outline the planning and actions to be taken for such situations. It is the expectation of the police that operators halt activities, make weapons safe by removing ammunition from the firearm, and contact the police.
5. Equipment – the training course should consider the equipment needed to ensure safety at all times. This could include a GPS tracking device and/or mobile phone tracker in addition to a first aid kit, telephone or radio communication and where necessary, an appropriate vehicle for transport.

Annex B - Further detail on the assessments for a badger culling training course

1. Trainees must be required to pass all assessments in order to successfully complete the badger-culling training course.

Written theory test

2. The theory test must comprise of a random selection of questions from a bank of relevant questions designed to test the attendee's understanding. Each test must have questions on all of the following topics. The test could be a multiple-choice questionnaire.
 - Wildlife legislation
 - Licence conditions
 - Health and safety
 - Planning and preparation
 - Badger ecology and behaviour
 - Firearms handling and safety
 - Firearms and ammunition (what is legal/not legal, likely to be licensed/ not licensed)
 - Controlled shooting procedure
 - Cage-trapping and shooting procedure
 - Carcase handling and disposal
 - Biosecurity measures
 - Necessary equipment
 - Emergency procedures

In addition all applicants wishing to use controlled shooting using a shotgun or rifle must show that they know where the target on the badger is. It would be preferable to use a stuffed badger for this, but if that is not possible, the attendees must be asked to indicate a 3" target circle on a life-sized outline of a badger (broadside on). They must be asked to show the target area for a level shot (shooter and badger at approximately the same height) and the target area for a shot taken from above (e.g. high seat or vantage point on a hill).

Those wishing to shoot cage-trapped badgers must be asked to indicate the target area on a life-sized drawing of a badger head (front facing).

Annex C - Course tutors

1. Organisations running the training course will be responsible for contracting persons with the appropriate expertise to deliver the course. The following areas of expertise should be covered:
 - a. Badger anatomy – to provide information on basic badger anatomy for identification and humane shooting/shot placement ;
 - b. Ecology/wildlife biology – to deal with field signs, sett identification, badger behaviour and ecology;
 - c. Firearms management – to deal with shooting techniques for both methods of culling and the recommended ammunition and safety measures, distance judging etc;
 - d. Shooting assessments – to run and invigilate the shooting competency test. Experience of risk assessments and setting up shooting ranges;
 - e. Wildlife management/cage-trapping – to cover trapping methods, surveying, pre-baiting and trap-setting.

2. Applicants for the position of course tutor must provide a CV detailing relevant experience for their application to be considered and approved. This should include as a minimum:
 - a. Relevant experience according to course content;
 - b. Practical experience in the field;
 - c. Experience teaching others;
 - d. Experience assessing others.