

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

July 2011

Annex E:

Natural England's draft guidance to participants on reasonable biosecurity measures

Please Note: This is a working draft of guidance, which will be revised and will form part of Natural England's Guidance to Applicants if a policy of badger control is adopted. This is not intended to be a standalone document.

TB Biosecurity Guidance

Good biosecurity is an important element of disease control for all livestock farms. Advice and guidance on biosecurity is available on the Defra and Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratory Agency websites (see <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/tb/abouttb/protect.htm> <http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/publications/advice-guidance/bovine-tb.html>). This document gives specific guidance on the range of biosecurity measures relevant to reducing the risk of disease transmission from badgers in a TB Control Area.

By reducing badger-cattle contact through high standards of farm biosecurity the risk of TB transmission from badgers to cattle (and vice versa) should be reduced, so biosecurity is an important component of effective disease control.

Whilst badger culling can reduce the incidence of new cattle TB breakdowns, the disruption caused to badger social organisation can lead to increased movement by surviving badgers and increased disease prevalence in those survivors. So it is especially important that high biosecurity standards are implemented on all farms with cattle and other vulnerable livestock (e.g. camelids and goats) in or near to areas where culling is taking place.

In TB Control Areas, where licensed culling is to take place, it is a condition of the licence that reasonable biosecurity measures are being, and for the duration of any licence will continue to be, implemented by participants on their land. For this purpose “reasonable measures” means measures that in the particular circumstances are practicable, proportionate and appropriate. Appropriate biosecurity advice should also be offered to relevant non-participants on neighbouring farms.

This guidance, together with the accompanying checklist, provides advice on the range of biosecurity measures that may be reasonable. Farmers who are bound by a TB Management Agreement are required to carry out a Biosecurity Self-Assessment (using the Checklist) and must take reasonable steps to maintain high standards of biosecurity. However, it is recognised that every farm is different and that biosecurity measures need to be tailored to individual circumstances.

The farmyard and buildings

The following measures should help reduce the frequency of badger visits to farm buildings and yards and therefore reduce the potential risk of transmission of bovine TB.

- Use of electric fencing around silage clamps. Electric wires should be at 10, 15 and 20cm above ground. An additional wire at 30cm can also be used to provide the most effective deterrent. But if flexibility is paramount, even a single electrified wire at 15cm can be a useful deterrent.
- Make sure all buildings are secure with no gaps or holes that badgers could use to gain access.
- Wherever possible, install solid doors/gates to buildings so badgers cannot climb through or over.
- Close doors to feed stores when not in use and especially at night.
- If feed sheds cannot be made secure consider using solid feed bins with lids that can be closed.

- Ensure the gap between the bottom of gates, doors or fences and the ground is less than 10cm.
- Raise feed or water troughs, where possible, to more than 75cm above ground level.
- Aim to make all mineral blocks and salt licks inaccessible to badgers.
- Clean up any feed spillage and keep the yard tidy.

In the field

- If you know where badger setts and latrines are on your farm, where possible keep your livestock away from these areas by using such means as electric fencing.
- Avoid feeding concentrates on the ground.
- Check and clean out any feed and water troughs regularly.
- Avoid spreading manure from TB infected cattle onto pastures known to be used by foraging badgers.
- Avoid intensive grazing or strip grazing on pastures known to be used by badgers as this grazing technique can force livestock to graze contaminated pasture.

Result of inadequate biosecurity in the badger control area

If Natural England considers that reasonable biosecurity measures have not been set in place then a licence may be withheld until such measures have been taken, or modifications to the application made (e.g. change of Control Area boundary), before a licence is issued, or Natural England may refuse to issue a licence for the proposed Badger Control Area. If a licence has already been issued and inadequate biosecurity measures have been found on a farm or farms then Natural England may exclude that farm or farms from the licence or, if the affected area is sufficiently large, suspend the licence until the issue is satisfactorily resolved.

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Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at:

tbbc@defra.gsi.gov.uk or

TBBC

Defra

17 Smith Square

London

SW1P 3JR