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July

From the Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare
Ben Bradshaw MP

Doc Lewis

Thank you for your letter of 6 June about badgers and bovine tuberculosis (TB).

The objective of the current trial is to assess whether a specially designed body snare for badgers is an effective and humane method of restraint. The body snare is intended to be non-lethal and the purpose of the proposed trials is to assess the snare. The study will follow the principles laid down in the draft EU Directive on Humane Trapping Standards whereby the humaneness of a trapping device is first assessed under controlled conditions in pen trials before, if its humaneness is deemed to be acceptable, field trials of the device are conducted to confirm its humaneness and to assess its efficacy and non-target risks. The aim is to release all captured badgers taken during the trial back into the wild unharmed.

Pen trials have now been completed and field trials have commenced. Following completion of the trials and peer review a full report will be published by the end of the summer.

The public consultation closed on 10 March 2006 and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond. We received 47,474 responses. At this stage we cannot give an indication on the specific timing of publication of the report on the consultation or a decision. However, given the seriousness of the disease situation we aim to proceed as quickly as possible whilst giving the issue the thorough consideration it requires. The decision is not a simple one. We are taking into account all the evidence, including the science. No decision has yet been made.

With best wishes,

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