

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Ben Bradshaw MP
DEFRA
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

June 6th 2006

Dear Minister,

I understand, from a letter sent to me earlier this week, that DEFRA had an unprecedented number of response to its consultation about the use of badger culling to control bovine TB. In this same week, I have learned that DEFRA is about to begin trialling a new type of 'body snare' for use on badgers. Snaring is cruel and indiscriminate. It poses risks to badgers and, if DEFRA goes ahead with field trials or with licensing the use of these new 'body snares', is a threat to other animals that may accidentally be trapped.

The 1992 Protection of Badgers Act is designed to prevent cruelty to badgers, yet the government is perpetuating cruelty under the guise of scientific monitoring. As part of the DEFRA trial I understand that badgers may be left in snares for up to 8 hours. DEFRA has asserted that no physical damage will be done to the animals but nothing can prevent badgers from instinctively reacting to being snared and struggling. It is well documented that badgers can lose limbs if they struggle when trapped. How can DEFRA possibly guarantee that no physical harm will be caused during its trial. There is also the possibility of psychological damage - from being contained and from being observed for such long periods of time.

This trial of 'body snares' also sends a worrying message about the government's commitment to protecting badgers. I already have grave concerns about the way in which 'developers' are routinely granted permission to interfere with badger setts that occupy the land they wish to build upon. By beginning to test the effectiveness of new snares, DEFRA is taking another step towards making a mockery of the legal protection that is meant to be offered to badgers. And it is putting place the means to carry out a mass cull of badgers before the results of a public consultation have been published, yet alone debated.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.