

Wildlife & Countryside Link
N101C Vox Studios
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Professor Sir Charles Godfray CBE FRS
University of Oxford

Sent by email

28th February 2025

Dear Professor Godfray,

Bovine TB strategy review 2025 update

We are writing on behalf of Wildlife and Countryside, the largest wildlife and environment coalition in England, to submit evidence to the 2025 update of the Bovine TB strategy review.

Wildlife and Countryside Link works to encourage the Government to ensure that any measures introduced to tackle bovine TB in cattle are legal, have a clearly attributable and material effect, are sustainable, humane, based on sound scientific evidence and publicly acceptable. We have opposed the badger cull policy on the grounds that it does not meet these key tests, and welcome Government's commitment to end culling.

For this transition away from culling to be successful and sustainable, the new national bTB strategy must take a holistic approach, underpinned with rigorous scientific evidence.

It is therefore welcome that Government has commissioned an independent expert assessment of recent evidence. This is an important opportunity to address some of the gaps in the last review, request access from Defra to unpublished veterinary studies examining residual disease in cattle, and to examine crucial new evidence regarding the inefficacy of culling, the success of cattle measures, and results deriving from technology like Whole Genome Sequencing. We strongly urge that badger culling should be suspended while the review is undertaken.

We would strongly encourage the 2025 panel to engage experts beyond those that have been appointed, particularly regarding wildlife, ethics and welfare. Despite their importance, these factors have previously been neglected in the development and assessments of bTB policy, and were not sufficiently considered in the previous review.

Furthermore, we are disappointed that the opportunity has not been taken to increase the diversity of the 2025 panel to ensure greater representation, particularly with regards to

gender and ethnicity. We suggest that the panel should seek to address this through ensuring it engages with a diverse range of external experts and stakeholders.

Finally, we urge the panel to ensure that findings are made publicly accessible, and are fully transparent, such that all stakeholders and public audiences can easily understand the conclusions reached. For example, through clearly explaining and making clear the important differences between causation, correlation, and/or association in the evidence considered and how these might be appropriately weighed by policy makers.

We enclose a document summarising key literature which we believe will be of interest to the panel, and the names of academic experts who we suggest the panel would benefit from engaging with. We also include a document summarising Wildlife and Countryside Link's key policy asks for England's bTB strategy.

We would be delighted to discuss any of these points further with you, if that would be of use.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

The Wildlife and Countryside Link Bovine TB Working Group

Badger Trust
Born Free Foundation
Humane World for Animals UK
RSPCA