

British Veterinary Association (BVA) Northern Ireland Branch submission to DAERA Consultation

Next Steps of the bTB Eradication Strategy for Northern Ireland

Who we are

1. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With over 18,000 members, our primary aim is to support the veterinary profession. We, therefore, take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.
2. The Northern Ireland Branch represents local veterinary associations, BVA's specialist divisions, government, and research organisations in Northern Ireland. The Branch advises BVA on the consensus view of the Northern Ireland members on local and United Kingdom issues.
3. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the implementation and next steps of the bTB eradication strategy for Northern Ireland. We

28. We support the monitoring of finishing units to determine if there is an increased risk of infection to both cattle and wildlife and an appropriate evaluation of the policy based on these findings.

Reactor quality assurance checks

29. We note that DAERA will keep its procedures in relation to atypical reactions to the tuberculin test under review and, in conjunction with the TBEP, will continue to consider additional measures to counteract suspected fraudulent activity. Engagement with PVPs on any

unacceptable high-risk practices or if they fail to adopt recommendations within such improvement notices. Where these have been applied there has been no reduced compensation as a result of non-compliance.

38. Whilst encouraging biosecurity is to be commended, additional measures should be both robust and achievable where voluntary measures are not being taken.

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We would ask that PVPs are also included within this engagement.

Genetic improvement

- 48.** Progress has been made in understanding the genetic basis of bTB resistance in cattle, enabling genetic selection for higher resistance. This sensible approach could, in the long term, make a valuable contribution to disease control.
- 49.** Scientists have identified genetic traits in cattle that might allow farmers to breed livestock with increased resistance to bTB.^{3,4,5} The research demonstrates that resistance of dairy

badger culling is at present the only method of badger control that has been shown to reduce the incidence of bTB in cattle.⁷

63. Of the methods of culling available, there is evidence that cage trapping and shooting is the method available that provides the least pain and distress. Therefore, we support cage trapping and shooting as the preferred method of culling and are unable to support the use of controlled/ free shooting.
64. The results from the second year of pilot badger culls in England did not demonstrate conclusively that controlled shooting could be carried out effectively and humanely based on the criteria set for the pilots. Adequate training for those undertaking culling operations is essential. Furthermore, appropriate monitoring of cull activities is important to ensure the

Compensation cap

70. If an animal or group of animals is compulsorily slaughtered for the purposes of statutory disease control, compensation should be paid. Compensation provides reimbursement for losses suffered by the animal keeper and as such compensation should be equitable and reflect the market value of the animal slaughtered. If the compensation paid is below market

