

19th September 2007

Comment for newsletter

BADGERS AND BOVINE TB RESOLVED

Alas poor Brock, it seems the government are still contemplating a badger cull supposedly to control cattle TB. Bowing to farmers / vet pressures, since they still believe badgers are the main reservoir of bovine TB.

The final report on the Krebs / randomized Badger Culling Trial came out in June, and three things are crystal clear:-

1. The cattle TB crisis is a direct result of relaxing TB controls, lack of testing due to foot and mouth in 2001 led to more cattle-to-cattle spread, with a doubling of TB herds and trebling of reactor cases. Re-imposing strict cattle measures brought about a dramatic drop back down in 2006, exactly mirroring the 1960s success which nearly eradicated TB WITHOUT any badger culls (see graph in news item 31st may 2006, www.badger.org.uk , also Michael Clark's revised Badgers, Whittet).
2. There were only 1515 TB badgers out of nearly 11,000 culled over 7 years from 2000 sq.km. Hardly a major TB reservoir or cause of anything at all.
3. In fact cattle TB is a respiratory "consumption" unlikely to be from badgers, whereas badger TB starts often in head lymph nodes so is a "scrofula" like human TB from unpasturised milk , so the few badgers with TB in (2) had merely caught from the preceding cattle : Victim not Villain.

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