

# Small Farms Association Newsletter



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© BBC Devon Twins at Sharptor Cornwall by Susanne Sibbick

Dear Members,

I am happy to report that beef and sheep meat prices are holding up despite the recession; with beef type, fat suckler cows returning up to £1,000 each, and fat ewes topping £85-£90 per head.

The only cloud on the horizon is the continued spread of the dreaded Bovine Tb and the associated and onerous testing regimes and restrictions. The SFA Steering Committee have agreed that vaccination of cattle against Bovine Tb would be a blessing. We understand a suitable vaccine is being developed; but may not be available for some years.

There are far too many fatal accidents on farms! Perhaps many of you have received information leaflets from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) with a piece of string attached about farm safety. The piece of string is supposed to remind you to come home safely.

Here are some safety tips I would like to share with you. When working with cattle you should ALWAYS carry a stick or crop, particularly when working around bulls or suckler cows with calves. When working around tractors and other farm machinery with PTO, please ensure you turn off the engine BEFORE you get out/off the tractor, as clothes can get caught on the PTO shaft and on the pick-up tyres of the machine. Please be careful.

I am sad to report that one of our longest standing members, Mrs Pearl Furneaux, died on 14th March aged 88 years. Pearl leaves a daughter, Mary, and two sons, Nicholas and David. Pearl lived and worked on her home farm, Spiddlescombe Manor, all of her life. She worked with horses and hand-milked the cows. Pearl had a 'stockman's' eye for cattle, sheep and horses. She is sadly missed.

I hope you can join us on 12th July in the SHDC's Council Chamber for a joint meeting of the Small Farms Association and the South Hams Agriculture Forum at which the renowned scientist and campaigner, Colin Tudge, will be presenting the paper he gave to the Oxford Farming Conference in January this year. Details of how to obtain tickets are on page 3.

**Philip Hosking**

## Any news?

We would like to let members know what is happening around the SFA network, and would be delighted to receive and print news you wish to share.

Contact the Office at:

Ley Coombe Farm,  
Modbury, Devon,  
PL21 0TU.

Tel 01548 830302

Fax 01548 831272

## Changes to badger vaccine deployment project (BVDP)

On 24 June, Defra announced that Ministers had reviewed the planned Badger Vaccine Deployment Project (BVDP), designed to vaccinate badgers against bovine TB in parts of England, due to start this summer.

The BVDP was designed at a time when culling was not an option. Since the policy on badger control is still being developed, ministers have decided vaccination will proceed as part of the project in the area near Stroud, Gloucestershire, only, beginning in July for five years. Badger sett surveys will also be completed in the area near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

This reflects both the changed policy position and the need to consider carefully all public expenditure. The aim of the BVDP is to build confidence in the principle and practicalities of vaccination, develop practical know-how for vaccinating badgers and provide an opportunity to learn how best to address practical difficulties.

The project was originally intended to cover six areas: NW of Stafford, E of Tenbury Wells; NE of Cheltenham; NW of Stroud; W of Tiverton; SE of Tiverton.

Trapping and vaccination is not now planned as part of the BVDP in the areas in Staffordshire, Herefordshire/ Worcestershire and Devon where the project was due to take place.

Agriculture Minister Jim Paice said: *"We've committed to carefully-managed and science-led badger control as part of a package of measures, and we're looking carefully at badger vaccination and culling as part of that. It makes sense to review the Badger Vaccine Deployment Project to keep our options open and to ensure best possible use of taxpayers' money. By going ahead with the training in Stroud, we'll maintain capacity to train lay vaccinators while we consider how best to deploy vaccines as part of a badger control policy."*

The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) will trap and vaccinate badgers using the recently-licensed injectable badger BCG vaccine on up to 100 km<sup>2</sup> of cattle land near Stroud and will offer training to lay vaccinators to help build capacity.

The Government stressed it is committed to introducing a carefully-managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine TB, as part of a package of measures.

On 24 March 2010, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate issued an authorisation for Badger BCG vaccine. This is the first tuberculosis vaccine authorised for use in badgers in the UK.

## Reducing the Regulatory Burden

Farming Minister, Jim Paice MP, has appointed Richard Macdonald to head a task force charged with the job of reducing the burden of regulation on Britain's farmers and growers. We wish him well.

## Greater controls announced to reduce the risk of bluetongue

On 1 June, the European Commission announced that Great Britain's bluetongue status will be reclassified from a BTV8 protection zone to a Lower Risk Zone (LRZ) for BTV8 with effect from 12 June.

This new classification means that all Bluetongue susceptible animals being brought in from other countries affected by BTV8 will have to meet more stringent vaccination conditions before importation.

This is an important step to ensure that bluetongue does not return to GB.

The move is welcomed by Jim Paice, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food who said:

*"This is a great result that speaks volumes for the work done by farmers and vets, who've worked with the Government to achieve this Lower Risk Zone status for bluetongue. It will help protect our livestock producers but they must remain vigilant and anyone importing stock must make sure that they meet the new requirements for importation."*

The move is further supported by the Chief Veterinary Officer, Nigel Gibbens who said:

*"We have remained in a bluetongue Protection Zone since the first case was confirmed and the efforts of responsible livestock owners and vets in vaccinating stock and the surveillance work by Animal Health, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, and the Institute for Animal Health has allowed us to successfully apply for this revised status."*

*"But we cannot become complacent, and I'd encourage farmers and vets to continue to vaccinate their livestock and remain vigilant for disease while additional targeted surveillance continues in the higher risk areas."*

Advice and guidance about bluetongue can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/bluetongue](http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/bluetongue)

## Joint Meeting of the Small Farms Association and The South Hams Agriculture Forum

**Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at 6<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Council Chamber South Hams District Council**

### Keynote Speaker - Colin Tudge

Colin Tudge is the founder of the Campaign for Real Farming. In 2010 he helped organise the first alternative conference to the established Oxford Farming Conference, the main aim of which was to promote a wholly new farming economy that focuses on health, the environment, animal welfare and new opportunities in the countryside. "Our present system of agriculture is not designed to feed people. Instead it seeks to maximise financial returns, and that is quite different. If we really want to feed everyone well we'll have to rethink farming from first principles." - Colin Tudge

**Tickets are available from Carol Trant at South Hams District Council. Tel: 01803-861267 or  
email: carol.trant@southhams.gov.uk**

**Admission is FREE; but booking is essential**

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

## SFA Summer Barbeque

**Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010, starting at 7 p.m.  
Ley Coombe Farm, Modbury, PL21 0TU  
kindly hosted by Philip Hosking**

**Tickets: £10.00 per adult, £5.00 per child (under 12)**  
Food and drink **are** included in the ticket price  
Food will include meat as well as sausages and burgers

**PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE BY PHONE OR POST - TEL: 01548 830302**  
Cover available if weather is inclement

*If any members play a musical instrument, we would be delighted if they wish to bring it along (provided it's portable)*

## Decisions, decisions! Creating and caring for habitats on your land

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August – 10<sup>30</sup>am - 1pm with Lynne Kenderdine  
(County Wildlife Sites Officer, Devon Wildlife Trust)**

What are the best ways to provide for wildlife on an acre or two of land? How do you manage scrub? Restore a pond? Manage stock? Or choose between allowing woodland to regenerate on species rich grassland? All these and more issues will be discussed on a walk around a wildlife rich site, with expert advice. A great opportunity to learn and share ways of encouraging wildlife and managing land whether you own a farm, or just an acre or two. Meet in the car park of the California Cross Inn, off the **Avonwick to Modbury** road to car share a short distance at 10<sup>30</sup>am. £4, to book, email lkenderdine@devonwildlifetrust.org or call 01392 279244.

The Chair of the South Hams Agriculture Forum (SHAF), John Yeoman, welcomed everyone; and thanked the Small Farms Association (SFA) for organising the joint meeting. He emphasised that it is the disease (Bovine Tb) about which all of us are concerned and not which species is carrying and transmitting it.

Philip Hosking, President of the Small Farms Association (SFA), reiterated John Yeoman's sentiments; and also urged the Government to listen to the advice of the keynote speaker, Dr John Gallagher MRCVS.

The Chair for the evening, George Rosevear, requested that the speakers be allowed to make their case; and for questions to be posed only during the 'Question and Answer Session' at the end of the presentations. He stated that Gary Streeter MP would be attending to the give the Conservative Party's perspective prior to the forthcoming General Election in May.

Dr John Gallagher opened his presentation by saying: reading the newspaper reports or watching television commentaries on the worsening TB epidemics in cattle and badgers can leave one in utter confusion as to what are the realities of the problem. When totally antagonistic views are repeatedly expressed over time then one loser is the real truth. He stated the basic facts and left the audience to judge the politics; but he maintained one thing is certain and that is no action on this issue is not an option if we wish to continue having domestic animals in the country.

Dr Gallagher presented a historical perspective by showing Tb hot spots in Devon and Cornwall in the 1970s. These hot spots now cover most of Devon and Cornwall and significant areas of Wales. He stated the cost in human and financial terms is huge.

The historical perspective: TB in cattle was rife at the turn of the twentieth century and in the 1930s when the population was about 44 million and resulted in about 3,000 deaths annually, mostly children under five. Livestock farming was gradually being crippled by the disease and on both public health and farming grounds a plan for eradication of TB was started in 1935. Pasteurisation was also introduced to make the milk safer. War halted progress; but by 1960 every bovine in Britain had been tested and all reactors slaughtered. In total 98.2 % of herds and about 99% of cattle were cleared whilst the remainder were still under test. Britain was declared TB attested implying virtual freedom from this scourge. Sadly repeated testing and slaughter failed to clear the remaining herds virtually all of which were in the South West. It wasn't until 1971 that TB was discovered in badgers on one of these farms.

Investigations in to the extent and significance of TB in badgers were carried out in detail over the next several years and a profile of the nature of the disease in the

badger and its epidemiological association with infection of cattle was determined. Strategic culling of badgers associated with outbreak farms was started in 1975. Later that year a trial badger removal was initiated in a cattle TB hotspot area at Thornbury, South Avon. A further such trial area was set up at Steeple Leaze, Dorset. In both areas complete removal of diseased badger communities resulted in complete cessation of the TB in the cattle. This lasted for 10 years at Thornbury before the first new outbreaks started at the periphery of the area. The strategic culling outside these areas also showed a marked decline in cattle TB whilst the uncontrolled farms continued to show persisting problems. By 1979 there were only 60 problem farms remaining in the country.

The disease amongst the badgers spread throughout sett communities as a consequence of their gregarious nature and mutual grooming in the confines of underground tunnel systems of their setts. But whilst the majority of infections remain latent or dormant the minority develop progressive and eventually fulminating disease. Discharge of TB bacteria results from infected sputum from lung discharges and when swallowed, infected faeces. Unlike cattle, badger kidneys are frequently affected thus also causing infection of urine. Usually as a consequence of territorial defence contaminated bite wounds spread infection to other badgers and discharges from the open sores also contaminate the environment. Excretion of TB bacteria has been recorded for up to 1 year whilst some have continued for 2 years. But the most serious problems are associated with terminal generalised disease in badgers which can cause massive contamination. Thus not only other badgers but other species sharing the same environment as diseased badgers are at risk.

Whilst small numbers of outbreaks have been noted in pigs, sheep and goats a worryingly larger number have occurred in deer and particularly camelids, mostly alpacas. But rural cats and dogs have also been affected and both these and the alpacas represent a real risk to man.

So why did strategic culling of TB badgers stop? Badgers had been shown to be the primary host of the problem. But there were widespread concerns about culling of what is a species of iconic status. The badger is one of Britain's oldest larger mammals, is king of the woodland and has origins which date back 250,000 years ago from fossil records. Also the original method used for the cull was gassing with cyanide which had been adapted from its use for rabbit control. Whilst highly effective this attracted an adverse press for the Minister especially from the not too long memories of its use during the war. The first of three Ministerial reviews was conducted in 1980 which resulted in stopping the use of cyanide which was found to cause distress and take slightly longer than thought to kill badgers. But this review (by Lord Zuckerman) as well

as the subsequent ones (by Profs Dunnett and McInery and Prof Krebs) all noted the badger as the significant host of TB infection. Krebs proposed a culling trial to resolve doubts as to this approach to TB control but the subsequent Randomised Badger Culling Trials (RBCT) carried out by an appointed Independent Scientific Group under the chair of Prof Bourne (ISG) proved far from conclusive.

The RBCT was highly controversial. Serious concerns were expressed about the conduct of the trials and the efficacy of the trapping methods such that 420 vets mostly from the West Country wrote a letter of no confidence to the Minister and one of the trapping team managers expressed his concerns to a subsequent Select Committee of Enquiry. The Chief Scientist also voiced disagreement with the final conclusions of the ISG adding to the turmoil.

The ISG's results were in conflict with the previous 25 years investigations by specialist TB vets and other scientists working both within and for the Ministry as well as well as the findings in Ireland. They had found a negligible reduction in cattle outbreaks and increase on the surrounding farms. The chairman in his overview had concluded that stricter cattle control measures in the absence of action on badgers would reverse the annual increase in incidence of 15%. In other words the incidence should be reduced by 15%. But even stricter controls introduced were accompanied by an even greater deterioration in the problem with some 40,000 cattle slaughtered in 2008. Final figures for 2009 are not available yet are likely to be similar.

The ISG used a computer disease model in these predictions and examination of this shows serious flaws in the assumptions used in setting it up. Their assumption that at least 60% of outbreaks result from cattle to cattle spread, strongly skews their findings and together with other dubious assumptions, present further concerns about these controversial trials. Many of these assumptions on infectiousness of cattle have derived from small scale experiments whose results are not consistent with the findings in the field.

The Minister announced to Parliament that he would have a public consultation over whether to cull or not. This provoked a huge response against any action on this iconic animal. Not surprisingly the subsequent Minister, quoting the "latest scientific findings of the ISG" decided not to agree to a cull of badgers in England. Social disruption and dispersal of badgers spreading infection (so called perturbation) had been a problem during the RBCT which some observers considered was the direct result of the trapping methods. But the ISG did note that there was no evidence of this two years after the trials and indeed the incidence of infected cattle then had been reduced by from 39% to 66%.

The Minister has decided to embark on a vaccine deployment project in six hotspot areas where the badgers are heavily diseased. (See news on page 2) Whether this will have any good effect is unknown but if it does it will take probably up to 10 years. It will

involve catching and injecting badgers with BCG. They will not be permanently marked and this is not intended as a scientific trial. It will however, cost an estimated 20 million pounds.

Wales has decided to reintroduce strategic culling in a bad TB hotspot area and developments there will obviously be awaited with great interest over here.

Pauline Kidner of Secret World introduced herself as a former dairy farmer whose farm had been affected by Bovine Tb. In 1984 she and her husband, Derek, opened the farm (now Secret World) to visitors; and it was after seeing the way that the animals were being cared for that the public started to bring injured wildlife to the farm in the hope they could be cared for. From here Pauline very soon developed a great love and interest for wildlife, and as her knowledge grew, so did her reputation for caring for these wild animals in need.

In 1985, the wildlife centre became affiliated to the National Federation of Badger Groups across the UK; and eventually to The Badger Trust.

Secret World was founded in 1992 to support this wildlife work. It became a registered charity in 1995; but then after the success of the 'Secret World' television series on ITV, the charity was officially renamed as Secret World Wildlife Rescue in 2005.

Secret World Wildlife Rescue is now the only 24/7 wildlife rescue centre in the South West, annually caring for over 4000 sick, injured and orphaned animals. The aim of their rescue and rehabilitation work is always to return the animals to the wild whenever possible; and believes in always giving an animal the best possible care. This includes the employment of trained animal carers (including a qualified Vet Nurse), and a commitment to provide medication, veterinary care, and time to recover as required.

Pauline argued that John Gallagher's information was out of date; and that the Independent Scientific Groups' (ISG) Final Report was conclusive about culling causing perturbation of badgers, resulting in more interaction between cattle and badgers causing more disease transmission. She upheld the view of the ISG that "*culling cannot meaningfully contribute to the future control of Tb in cattle in Britain*". (ISG Final Report Point 9).

She also believes the science has already been done at a cost of over £100 million; and there is no necessity to undertake further investigations at present to reach a rational conclusion about the control of the disease in cattle .

Gary Streeter Mp was introduced as the only sitting MP in South Devon seeking re-election; and also someone who comes from a farming background who, therefore, understands the issues associated with Bovine Tb. He said he believed under a Conservative Government, agriculture would be taken more seriously; and a carefully managed badger control policy would be implemented quickly. If elected to Government, a Judicial

*(Continued on page 6)*



## **The voice of the small farmer**

Ley Coombe Farm  
Modbury  
IVYBRIDGE  
Devon PL21 0TU

Phone: 01548 830 302

Fax: 01548 831 272

Email: philip@small-farms-association.co.uk

**We're on the Web:  
[www.small-farms-association.co.uk](http://www.small-farms-association.co.uk)**

*The Small Farms Association was formed in October 1997 because of the reluctance of major farming organisations to support the needs of small farmers.*

*Since its inception, the concerns and needs of small farms have been addressed by: ~*

- \* *Lobbying MPs and other public representatives*
- \* *Liaison with DEFRA*
- \* *Liaison with other farming organisations*
- \* *Contributing to policy development*
- \* *Creating our own Constitution and Code of Practice*
- \* *Providing advice and support to members*

***Please help us to continue the work on your behalf by providing feedback on crucial policy issues and recruiting new members.***

***Annual Family Membership – £20.00***

**Have you paid your  
SFA subscription?**

## **South Devon Coastal Local Action Group Update**

*(Continued from page 5)*

Review and evaluation of the existing science behind Bovine Tb would be undertaken before deciding to implement a badger cull as part of a package of measures to control the disease. He said if a cull were necessary, a Conservative Government would implement one. He also acknowledged the human misery surrounding the issue.

There was a lively Question and Answer session from the large attendance. Questions included:

1. What are the statistics for farms that suffer BTb long-term of ever becoming clear? A: Not good since most of the transmission is badger to cattle and this constitutes 80-89% of the disease pathway. Sadly, more youngsters are contracting the disease.
2. Why were the most recent trials so flawed? A: Because they were conducted by scientists with little veterinary input. Furthermore, the modelling was flawed.
3. What is the best financial way forward? A: Developing a more accurate test; but introducing the skin test on a widespread basis.

Many comments and statements were made relating to personal experience with Bovine Tb, some of which were heart-breaking.

In conclusion, it was agreed that regardless of which side of the divide one is on, this issue must be addressed and quickly before both the human and animal population suffer any more pain.

The LAG was established to provide funding for projects that will improve the area economically, socially and environmentally.

To date, the LAG has committed over £500,000 of funding to 31 projects. Together, these projects will bring a total investment valued at over £2 million to the South Devon Coastal area.

This is a reminder that there still funding opportunities available.

The funding opportunities are:

- Business Growth and Diversification Fund
- Local Food Initiative Fund
- Local Business and Enterprise Cooperation Fund
- Enablement Small Grants Fund

Further information can be obtained from Carol Trant at South Hams District Council. Contact numbers below; or Cathy Heath at South Devon Coastal LAG, C/o Kingsbridge Information Centre, The Quay, Kingsbridge, TQ7 1HS. Tel: 01548-858805; Email: [admin@ruraldevon.org](mailto:admin@ruraldevon.org)

Anyone who like a pdf copy of the LAG newsletter, giving more details of the aims of each fund, the funding available and the criteria that must be met, should contact Carol Trant, Business Support Officer, South Hams District Council, Follaton House, Plymouth Rd, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5NE. Tel: 01803-861267 or Email: [carol.trant@southhams.gov.uk](mailto:carol.trant@southhams.gov.uk)