

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

<p>1. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>When DEFRA announced that badger culling would be phased out by 2025, many people believed that the cull had ended. Sadly, culling in Oxfordshire intensified, seemingly with the intent of shooting as many badgers as possible before the deadline. Over 50% of the county is in the killing zones. In addition to the 3 Oxfordshire zones, culling spills over our borders with neighbouring counties.</p> <p>The first of the Oxfordshire badger culling licenses should end in 2023 and culling should cease after 2025. However, DEFRA policy allows 'epidemiological culling' (epi-culling or EC). This involves killing ALL (100%) of badgers across a large area in response to a new 'hot spot' /cluster of herd breakdowns.</p> <p>Epi-Culling was first introduced in Cumbria, and has been adopted on a trial basis in parts of England over the past five years. A recent scientific report shows that epi-culling is ineffective as a control measure. However, DEFRA, APHA, the bTB Hub/ NFU</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SUDBURY, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>I am not aware of the County Council having yet received any official consultation regarding licensed badger control within the County, or on its land.</p> <p>As you may recall, at a County Council meeting on the 10th July 2018, Members voted in favour of a motion to ask the Leader to write to DEFRA saying that we are opposed to the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire. This was on the basis that at that point there had been 5 years of culling in high-risk areas which, rather than reducing bovine TB, had seen it increase. The culling caused badgers to move in from other areas so that any which did have TB were spreading it further.</p> <p>The County Council currently has no formal policy or legal agreements regarding the licensed control of badgers by its tenants, nor does it have a formal policy regarding the licensed control of badgers on land managed in-hand. Should this be requested, whilst having due regard to legislative requirements where possible the council would strongly oppose this happening on any land over which we have control.</p>
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and British Cattle Veterinary Association, continue to advocate its use. Epi-culling would see badgers killed in response to bTB herd breakdowns.

During 2021, APHA identified two herd breakdown clusters in Oxfordshire. In October 2022, the Oxfordshire bovine TB cluster pilot was launched and will run for at least one year. The pilots supplement existing control measures (which include existing cull licences) and are creating a coordinated network of farmers and landowners. This would provide a very efficient platform for epi-culling in the designated cluster areas.

DEFRA has announced (August 2023) that it will hold a consultation on culling in the autumn of this year. It is likely to include proposals to pilot epi-culling in Oxfordshire.

With Oxfordshire being considered for future epi-culling where 100% of badgers will be killed in an area, does the council have a policy on permitting badger culling on its land?