



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

STOP, STOP, TELL.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Renewing Communications and Engagement with Farmers in Relation to Badgers

Badgers are not the sole cause of bovine TB in cattle but they are an important one. To minimise the risk of TB from badgers to your cattle;

STOP cattle getting to badgers at pasture by fencing off badger setts and latrines,

STOP badgers getting to cattle at housing by placing skirting on shed gates,

TELL the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) of any badger activity on your farm.

Farmers should not under any circumstances interfere with badgers or their setts. To do so is an offence under the Wildlife Acts.

Where badgers are associated with a disease breakdown, they are humanely removed in accordance with the Wildlife Acts. This happens throughout the country and in addition to this DAFM is now vaccinating badgers to prevent TB breakdowns on Irish farms in about one third of the cattle farming area of the country.

Capturing an animal living in the wild requires two key competencies: Knowing where the animals are and successfully capturing them. DAFM relies on good information regarding badger locations to maintain good capture levels. Information from farmers is crucial to this effort. Farmers and hunstmen are contacted by DAFM when there are breakdowns for information on badger activity. Occasionally farmers group together to co-ordinate searches for badger activity. These efforts, in particular in Iveragh in 2018 and the Burren this year, provide excellent information and DAFM would encourage local farming groups to band together in this way.

In the spring of 2020 all farmers in vaccination areas received a text asking them to watch the DAFM video on badgers at www.bovinetb.ie and to inform DAFM of badger activity on their farm. Over the next couple of weeks all farmers will get a similar text. Farmers are asked to watch the video and let DAFM know of badger activity on their farm. Over the coming months all setts will be visited starting with the highest priority areas in disease terms.

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DAFM is constantly training and monitoring its staff, to ensure that its' ability to capture badgers remains at a consistently high level and that the welfare of the animals is protected. This is key whether removing or vaccinating.

DAFM puts a lot of resources into protecting Irish farms from TB from wildlife. A budget of €4.6 million is provided annually to aid the work of almost 200 staff engaged in badger work throughout the country. To facilitate this work, DAFM has developed a geospatial Wildlife Unit Software which holds information to date on over 40,000 setts. It allows DAFM to set up capture buffers within 1.5Km of the outside perimeter of all farms and it holds information on all badgers captured at each sett for removal or vaccination including, individual identification of vaccinated badgers so that they can be monitored over time. In addition to this DAFM are collaborating with UCD and Wageningen University on measuring the performance of vaccination in 9 sites throughout the country.

Communication with farmers around DAFMs' Wildlife Unit's activities takes place via letters to farmers after captures at setts on their land, letters to farmers within 1Km of breakdowns in a new area, local farmer meetings, meetings with farm leaders nationally, leaflets and a video on www.bovinetb.ie which advises farmers how to identify badger activity.

Signs of Badger Activity

- **Paths 15 to 20cm wide - well worn down low when going across walls/ditches**
- **Setts with 25-30 cm entrance which does not narrow**
- **Multiple entrances to setts**
- **Large spoil heaps at sett entrances with larger stones**
- **Bedding associated with setts**
- **Snuffle holes**
- **Overtured cow-pads**
- **Latrine pits where dog-like but darker faeces regularly deposited**
- **Footprint has kidney shaped pad with straight toe alignment**