

U.S. expert criticizes U.K. badger killing

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A University of California-Davis scientist is criticizing the British practice of killing wild badgers to prevent tuberculosis in cattle.

Rosie Woodroffe, an assistant professor of conservation biology, is the co-author of two reports released Wednesday in England that say the 30-year-old controversial practice can actually make matters worse.

The new reports summarize seven years of study for the British Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which was to comment on the findings Thursday in Parliament.

"In Britain, this is a huge controversy because TB genuinely affects farmers' livelihoods, but badgers are beloved by the public and protected by law," said Woodroffe. "Imagine our American bison/brucellosis issue and our wolf/livestock predation issue rolled into one," she said, noting North American badgers do not carry bovine tuberculosis.

But the scientists said whether culling was widespread or localized, it disrupted the badgers' territorial organization and made them travel more widely. On a geographical scale of up to 37 square miles, the negative effects of culling greatly outweighed the benefits, they said.

The reports appear online in the British journal *Nature* and the British Ecological Society's *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

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