

# Scientists urge Britain to cancel badger cull

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File picture of a badger being chased by a dog during training for a traditional hunt in Kyrgyzstan in August 2007. British wildlife experts on Sunday condemned a plan to cull thousands of badgers in the UK in a bid to fight bovine tuberculosis, saying that killing the animals could worsen the problem it aims to solve.

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Queen guitarist Brian May has spearheaded a high-profile campaign against the plans to kill up to 3,000 of the short-legged, black-and-white creatures, with an [online petition](#) winning more than 150,000 signatures.

The scientists led by Patrick Bateson, president of the Zoological Society of London, and including academics from Oxford and Cambridge, wrote in the Observer newspaper that the [government](#) itself had predicted only limited benefits from the proposed cull.

"The complexities of TB transmission mean that licensed culling risks increasing cattle TB rather than reducing it," they wrote.

"We are concerned that badger culling risks becoming a costly distraction from nationwide [TB control](#)... We therefore urge the government to reconsider its strategy."

Farmers say the measure is required to tackle TB in cattle because badgers spread the disease to livestock, costing owners and the taxpayer millions of pounds a year.

But the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty of Animals has said the government should vaccinate badgers instead, while animal rights activists have threatened direct action to disrupt culling.

An initial licence for a pilot cull was issued last month to farmers in Gloucestershire, western England, but culls have not yet begun.

Some 18,213 cattle were slaughtered because of [TB infection](#) from January to June 2012, according to government statistics.

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