

## **bTB Evidence Project Announcement**

- A summary of the scientific evidence relevant to the control of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in Great Britain has just been made available and will be published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society, Biological Sciences*. It was co-ordinated by the Oxford Martin School at Oxford University and involved scientists from different fields from throughout the country.
- Bovine TB is a very important disease of cattle that has major costs to the government and to the farming community. It is also found in wildlife, especially badgers, and whether culling badgers should be part of bTB control is very controversial.
- Several factors make bTB a particularly difficult disease to understand in cattle and wildlife but the study shows the substantial progress that has been made over recent decades that can help inform policy.
- The review looks at what we know about the disease's epidemiology, testing and surveillance, biosecurity, culling badgers and vaccination (of both cattle and wildlife). The authors provide a consensus judgement about the nature of each component of the evidence base, for example whether it is based on detailed experiments or expert opinion. They have tried to describe the evidence in as policy neutral manner as possible.
- Agreeing on what the science says is important because it means everyone can discuss the topic based on a shared evidence base. The assumptions upon which policy is based, and the expectations about its results, must also be consistent with what the science tells us.
- But natural science alone cannot determine policy. Policy makers must also factor in evidence from the social sciences including economics, areas not considered by the project. And finally in a democracy politicians have to make difficult decisions about the interests of different stakeholder groups when they come into conflict.

### Notes

- The project was led by Charles Godfray & Angela McLean at the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford and also involves Christl Donnelly (Imperial College), Rowland Kao (Glasgow University), David Macdonald and Gillian Petrokofsky (Oxford University), James Wood (Cambridge University), Rosie Woodroffe (Institute of Zoology) and Douglas Young (MRC National Institute of Medical Research).
- A preprint of the project is available at <http://www.futureoffood.ox.ac.uk/news/bTBvidence>.
- The full citation is H.C.J. Godfray, C.A. Donnelly, R.R. Kao, D.W. Macdonald, R.A. McDonald, G. Petrokofsky, J.L.N. Wood, R. Woodroffe, D.B. Young, A.R. McLean (2013), A restatement of the natural science evidence base relevant to the control of bovine tuberculosis in Great Britain, *Proceedings of the Royal Society, Biological Sciences* (in press).
- We welcome comments at <mailto:bTB@oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk>.