

29 March 2010



First tuberculosis vaccine for badgers is authorised

The first tuberculosis (TB) vaccine for badgers has now been licensed for use.

Defra will introduce the BadgerBCG vaccine this summer as part of the Badger Vaccine Deployment Project. It will be used in the six areas in England most affected by TB in cattle.

The Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) led the research programme, working closely with the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), to generate the data on the safety and efficacy of BCG in badgers necessary for the licensing of BadgerBCG. VLA is the holder of the marketing authorisation.

Environment Secretary Hilary Benn said:

“This marketing authorisation would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the scientists at VLA and Fera. It reflects 10 years and £11 million of Defra-funded research and development.”

Glyn Hewinson, Head of the TB Group at VLA, said:

“VLA is very proud to have led this successful programme of work and to be the Marketing Authorisation Holder of BadgerBCG. It is the culmination of many years work by a large number of talented people. As a result, vaccination is now another tool in the toolbox in the fight against bovine TB.”

Notes for editors

Hilary Benn announced in Parliament on 25 March that the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) issued an authorisation for BadgerBCG vaccine on 24 March 2010. VLA is the market authorisation holder and the vaccine is manufactured by the Statens Serum Institut in Denmark.

The Badger Vaccine Deployment Project is funded by Defra and is being run by Fera. It will involve trapping and vaccinating badgers, for five years, in six areas from the worst affected parts of Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Devon. Vaccination will commence in summer 2010. It aims to build confidence in the principle and practicalities of vaccination. It will develop practical know-how for vaccinating badgers and will provide an opportunity to learn how best to address practical difficulties. For more information see

www.fera.defra.gov.uk/bvdp

BadgerBCG can only be supplied, sold or used for as part of bovine TB control measures and may only be used in badgers. It has been classified as a Prescription Only Medicine – Veterinarian (POM-V) which means it can only be supplied with a prescription from a veterinary surgeon. Contractors will be trained and licensed to carry out the injectable vaccination.

An exemption order to the Veterinary Surgeons Act to allow trained and accredited non-veterinarians to administer vaccine to badgers by injection has been laid before Parliament and is expected to come into force on the 6 April 2010.

In the UK badgers are a protected species and any intervention, involving trapping and vaccinating, will require licensing by the relevant authorities in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

VLA is an executive agency of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It is a regional network of 16 veterinary laboratories including a central facility near Weybridge in Surrey.

VLA provides a wide range of applied research and consultancy on livestock diseases and surveillance of new and emerging diseases for the Government and animal health industry. It is also a national and international reference laboratory for many farm animal diseases including avian influenza, bovine tuberculosis, classical swine fever and TSEs. www.vla.gov.uk

The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) is an executive agency of Defra. Its remit is to provide robust evidence, rigorous analysis and expert professional advice to government, international organisations and the private sector, in order to support and develop a sustainable and secure food chain, a healthy natural environment, and to protect the global community from biological and chemical risks.

Fera has the largest group of wildlife management specialists in the UK. This along with extensive facilities and resources has positioned our scientists as leaders in wildlife management and disease control. Fera is responsible for the coordination of the Badger Vaccine Deployment Project.