

## Badger-proof equipment and other control measures to reduce the risk of Bovine TB.

*“Biosecurity or disease risk management measures, aim to reduce/prevent the introduction of bovine TB and other diseases onto a farm from outside sources.”*

Scientific research has conclusively shown that badgers are a significant reservoir of *Mycobacterium Bovis* (the bacterium which causes bovine TB), posing a big TB risk to cattle. Badgers gaining access to cattle housing, silage clamps and feed stores can be a significant factor in a herd having a TB breakdown, therefore it is very important that farmers take practical measures to keep badgers out of these areas, wherever possible. If you are considering investing in new equipment such as feed/water troughs or gates, we would encourage you to consider badger-proof equipment. Items available include closed or sealed feed bins, raised or self-tipping water troughs and calf creep feeders with flaps to stop badgers gaining access to the feed (see below).



Calf Creep Feeder Open



Calf Creep Feeder Closed

Sheeted doors and gates, with no more than a 10cm gap at the base and solid sheeting around cattle pens and feed areas are effective at keeping badgers out but must be a minimum of four foot high with a smooth surface.



Before

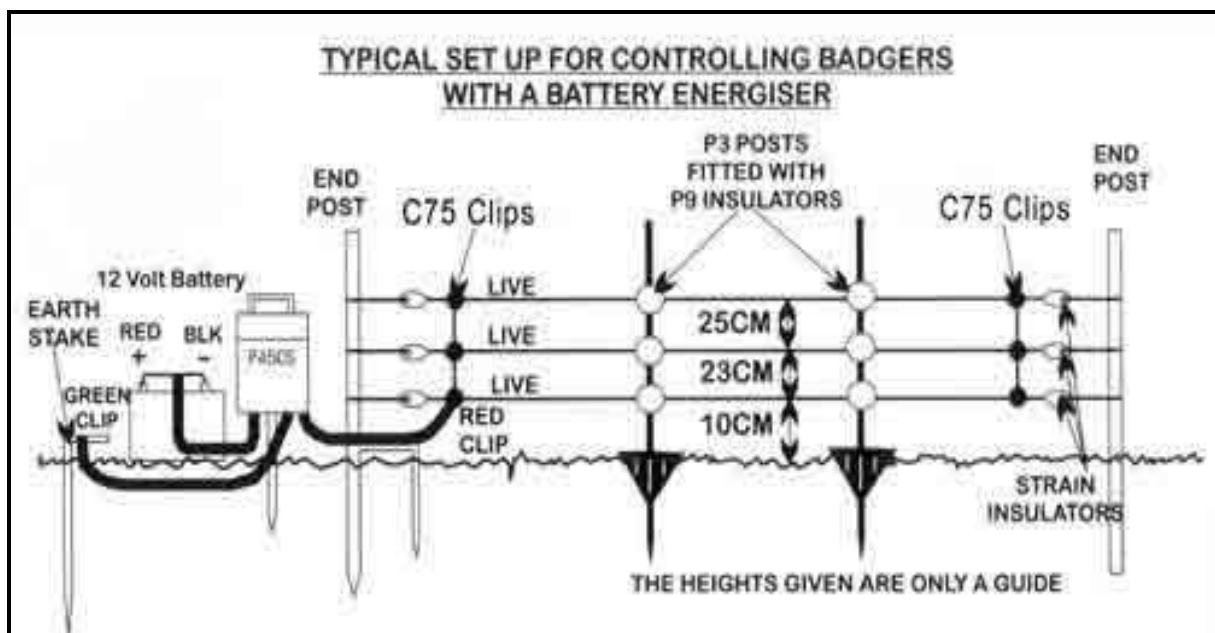


After

If you feed mineral licks to cattle at grazing, homemade devices such as upturned oil drums can be effectively modified to keep them well off the ground.



Four strands of electric fencing set at 10, 15, 20 and 30cm has been proven to be effective at excluding badgers and can be useful in certain situations, but must be regularly maintained to remain effective.



FERA research has shown that electric fence wires placed at 10cm, 15cm, 20cm, and 30cm are the most effective at preventing badger access to silage clamps etc.

Single strand electric fencing around badger setts and latrine areas should be used where possible to prevent cattle grazing these areas. These are practical considerations which can be achieved relatively inexpensively and will help to reduce the risk of infection to your cattle from wildlife. Please see the South West TB Farm Advisory Service (SWTBFAS) website for photographs of equipment and 'before and after' examples or give us a call to discuss options and remember, we also have several infra-red CCTV cameras available to set up on farm to see if badgers are entering your farm yards and buildings at night, please ring us to book the cameras for your farm.

In addition to carrying out farm visits across the South West to help farmers set up isolation units, specialist TB units and provide support and guidance with marketing options and general TB queries, SWTBFAS have done useful work on biosecurity issues. Defra asked SWTBFAS to facilitate three 'Understanding Bovine TB' biosecurity meetings in March as part of their 'Farmer Advice Project'. These were held at the Duchy College and on farms in Dorset and Wiltshire. We are very aware that there are other areas in the SW which would benefit from meetings of this kind and SWTBFAS are keen to hold similar events with private vets in other areas. We would be grateful to hear from farmers with expressions of interest in attending an event in their area and from private vets who may be interested in having a TB meeting for their clients sponsored by the SWTBFAS.

SWTBFAS now have three infra-red CCTV cameras for each of the TB Farm Advisors covering the region, which are proving very popular and are regularly set up on farms capturing wildlife activity in and around buildings, yards and feed sources. A badger infected with bTB can pose a significant threat to the health of cattle in a short period of time, so if you have any suspicions that badgers may be accessing your cattle housing and feed areas, please phone the office to book our cameras. The advisors often combine setting up a camera on-farm with carrying out a badger survey to ascertain the amount of badger activity and number of setts on the farm, especially in fields surrounding the farm yard and buildings. Depending on the level of activity found, the advisors are able to give advice on reducing the risks of disease spread through a range of practical measures. We are also in the process of producing a simple two page illustrated leaflet with some helpful hints to help farmers combat bTB infected badger visits to farm yards and buildings. This leaflet will be sent out to farmers on our newsletter mailing list next month.

### **Biosecurity Quick Tips**

- 1. Know your own farm inside out;**
- 2. Walk every field boundary regularly;**
- 3. Record on maps (badger setts, latrines, feeding areas, runs) and be aware of seasonal changes;**
- 4. Check for setts close to buildings;**

5. **Secure all buildings and feed stores;**
6. **Check barns, sheds and hay/straw stacks;**
7. **Close sheeted gates to deny access;**
8. **Consider badger access when designing new buildings.**

## **Practical Control Measures**

### Access – as mentioned above

- Keep badgers out of cattle housing and feed stores. Sides and doors of buildings should be closed, made of a smooth and solid material and be more than 1.5 metres high, (solid sheets of metal or plywood can be secured to a 5 bar gate). Gaps at the sides and under doors and walls should be no greater than 10 cm and must not be able to be enlarged by digging and chewing;
- Feed store walls and doors should be secure and doors kept closed (especially at night). If it is not possible to modify or secure a feed store, it is worth considering solid feed bins with lids or cyclones;
- Silage clamps should be well covered and the face protected by electric fence if not in use – strands of wire should be at 10, 15, 20 and 30 cm above the ground.

### Feeding

- Avoid feeding concentrates on the ground. Feed and water troughs should be raised, kept clean and free of contaminants. Raised troughs and feeders should ideally be free standing with sheer sides to 80 cm;
- Molassed blocks and minerals should be placed beyond the reach of badgers;
- Intensive grazing encourages cattle to graze margins of fields, where there is more risk of infection;
- Avoid cattle getting access to woodland and badger latrines – single strand electric fence.

### Other

- If at all possible keep/switch to a closed herd and breed your own replacements;
- Avoid spreading slurry from another farm;
- Avoid sharing trailers, etc, if at all possible;
- Don't feed milk from a reactor or IR to calves;
- Where effluent or waste water drains into a soak away ditch, wildlife and cattle must not have access. This is to prevent contamination of the environment and disease spread.