

# Framing the Bovine TB issue: the lessons of history

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A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located at the bottom right of the slide.

# The Governance of Livestock Diseases (GOLD) project

- ◆ Biological Sciences (Graham Medley PI), Economics, Law, PAIS
- ◆ Funded under RELU 3 by Research Councils
- ◆ Focus on endemic diseases
- ◆ 'New thinking' within government on animal diseases
- ◆ 6 diseases including Johne's disease, bovine diarrhoea, Bovine TB

# Framing an issue

- ◆ 'Intractable policy controversies exist and are fundamental to the policy-making process ... Frame analysis helps us to account for their origin and stubborn survival.' (Schön and Rein 1994)
- ◆ Framing refers to how we think about an issue, how we define it, the language we use to talk about it
- ◆ Boo words and hurrah words

# The emotions of protest

- ◆ Role of emotion in the policy process
- ◆ Specification of blame
- ◆ Generation of villains
- ◆ The extent to which notions of injustice come into play
- ◆ Limits of a technocratic perspective
- ◆ But policy learning is possible and history helps us to do that

# Some possible frames for bTB

- ◆ Affects farmers, their productivity and their well-being
- ◆ Source of public expenditure burdens
- ◆ Damaging to the international reputation of the UK Government
- ◆ A threat to cherished wildlife
- ◆ An animal welfare issue – how do we value cattle against badgers?

# Evidence-based policy-making

- ◆ Highly rationalistic approach using analysis and evidence-based policy-making
- ◆ What happens when the evidence is incomplete and contested?
- ◆ Alternative framings of the policy problem polarised
- ◆ Normal techniques of stakeholder management through co-optation and mediation failed to work

# Timeline

- ◆ 1923 – Government encourages voluntary eradication in dairy farms
- ◆ 1935 – 40% of cows infected. National programme of attesting herds as TB free
- ◆ 1950 – Compulsory campaign of eradication
- ◆ 1960 – Reactors decline to negligible proportions

# Timeline (2)

- ◆ 1971 – Bovine TB discovered in badger in Gloucestershire
- ◆ 1973 – Badgers Act
- ◆ 1975 – Badger Panel set up
- ◆ 1980 – Zuckerman Report (a wild card) – carry on
- ◆ 1982 – Peter Walker bans gassing of setts after Porton Down research
- ◆ 1986 – Dunnet Report, 'son of Zuckerman', strategy of limited badger control



# Timeline (3)

- ◆ 1992 – Protection of Badgers Act
- ◆ 1997 – Krebs report, leads to field trials of culling
- ◆ 2003 – Badger Panel abolished
- ◆ 2007 – report of Independent Scientists Group, King review
- ◆ 2008 – House of Commons Defra Ctte. Report. Hilary Benn decides not to allow culling.
- ◆ 2009 – Welsh Govt. decides to cull

# Basis of paper

- ◆ Draws on documents in the National Archives at Kew up to 1992, read almost everything
- ◆ Badger control 'influenced by practical and political expediency, field experience, research, public relations considerations, the perplexities and imponderable nature of TB badger/cattle relationships and much discussion among interested parties, especially ... veterinarians.' (1986)

# The Old Rogue Badger (1965)

- ◆ 'The Ministry does not regard the badger as an agricultural pest. Indeed, they have some beneficial effect since they may destroy many harmful insects and other pests'
- ◆ Occasionally damage and 'usually this is caused by an old "rogue" badger 'to be shot by an expert marksman when emerging from its sett at dusk'
- ◆ 'On the whole the badger is generally regarded as a friend of the farmer'

# The bad badger

- ◆ An image a bad, deviant or antisocial badger, 'a senile and virtually toothless animal' whose actions gave a justification for intervention
- ◆ Could not be trapped – at odds with image of being senile
- ◆ 'Because of the activities of "rogue" badgers , we could not say that badgers are not harmful'

# The construction of the rogue badger

- ◆ 'Between ourselves I find the reference to "rogue" badgers slightly puzzling. Do we know such a creature exists, or it is merely that badgers (along with other species) are likely to become opportunists when the occasion arises.' (Letter from Nature Conservancy official)

# What is the appeal of Old Brock?

- ◆ Cultural constructions of the badger treat it as a cherished species endowed with elements of magic and mystery
- ◆ *Wind in the Willows*, poetry of Ted Hughes
- ◆ 'The badger: the sleekest, most beautiful and friendliest of British mammals' (*Daily Mail*)

Or like this



# Descriptions of badger

- ◆ Balance of nature
- ◆ Beautiful
- ◆ Cleanest
- ◆ Falsely accused
- ◆ Innocent
- ◆ Victim



# Emotive nature of arguments

- ◆ 'My only wish is that if the Minister proves to be wrong then he will be eaten by badgers as Bishop Hatto was eaten by rats' (Lord Arran, sponsor of the Badgers Bill)
- ◆ 'Lynch mob rule ... now threatens the very existence of the badger in West Cornwall' (John Pardoe MP)

# Descriptions of policy

- ◆ Animal loving nation
- ◆ Cruel
- ◆ Destruction
- ◆ Extermination (frequently)
- ◆ Morally grubby
- ◆ Pernicious
- ◆ Sick society
- ◆ Simplistic
- ◆ Slaughter (frequently)

# Discourse used in one short letter

- ◆ 'Wholesale destruction', 'destruction', 'destroyed'
- ◆ 'Barbaric'
- ◆ 'Indiscriminate'
- ◆ 'Prolonged suffering'
- ◆ 'Financial gain for a small section of the community'
- ◆ 'Inoffensive', 'natural heritage'

# Badger Consultative Panel (1976)

- ◆ National Farmers' Union, British Veterinary Association, NUAAW, CLA
- ◆ RSPCA, Mammal Society, Council for Nature, Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, SPNC
- ◆ Assorted experts
- ◆ Eventually National Federation of Badger Groups

# Functions of Panel

- ◆ 'The Panel's support for the Ministry's policy and operations in this emotionally sensitive area is most valuable as a means of putting our views to organisations that might be critical and hostile'
- ◆ 'Its existence enables the Minister to say that policy is continuously monitored by all of the organisation who have a legitimate interest in the issues arising and thereby constitutes a powerful political weapon.'

## Functions of Panel (2)

- ◆ (1986) 'The panel is a useful defence against hostile critics and provides a forum for reasonably rational discussion'
- ◆ (1990) 'The Panel plays a major role in demonstrating that all shades of opinion have been taken into account on badgers before we kill them'

## Direct action (MAFF, 1985)

- ◆ 'There is now a minority of persons prepared to intervene physically in badger control operations ... It is difficult to foresee the pressure diminishing. Given the militancy of animal rights' organisations it may increase ... It is possible that any major confrontation would stimulate a whole series of such confrontations'

# Folkington Bowl

- ◆ Protesters camped out to prevent badger culling (1984-5)
- ◆ Should they send in police? NFU demanded action, but would create martyrs
- ◆ 'If we take any action ... the vigilantes will see us, mess up the exercise, may even get into a punch-up and we shall have the most adverse publicity.'
- ◆ Compensation to farmers costing money, Treasury unhappy



# Folkington Bowl (2)

- ◆ Concerns about physical violence to staff, one 'confronted by two men wearing balaclava helmets with blackened faces one wielding a pickaxe handle'
- ◆ Local vicar encouraged to denounce protesters in parish magazine
- ◆ Decided to sit it out
- ◆ Protesters got wet, cold and fed up, one or two leaders imprisoned on other matters

# Is there a solution?

- ◆ 'At last someone puts the real questions down on paper – but will there be any answers?' (MAFF official, 1982)
- ◆ Badger Panel produced useful political cover but little common ground between opposed interests

# What has been learnt

- ◆ Broadly based fora not going to reconcile strongly opposed interests or produce workable solutions
- ◆ There are risks of exclusion in not involving all stakeholders
- ◆ Stakeholder strategy that engages with a more limited range of key interests (blue tongue)

# After the election

- ◆ Conservatives supported a badger cull (Dave Cameron mentioned it in a speech in Cornwall)
- ◆ Lib Dems support a limited cull
- ◆ Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition in Wales is planning a cull
- ◆ Labour has opposed a cull
- ◆ I'm grateful I am not a civil servant!