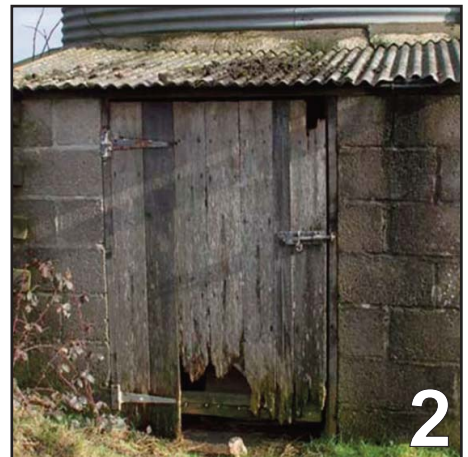


This information sheet covers badger behaviour and provides examples of biosecurity which may reduce the risk of pig herds being infected by bTB from badgers, as well as from other sources. Historically the UK pig industry has been excellent at biosecurity and it should be no extra effort to include badgers in the list of disease vectors to be aware of when reviewing your biosecurity plans. Any biosecurity programme should form part of your herd health plan prepared in conjunction with your herd vet.

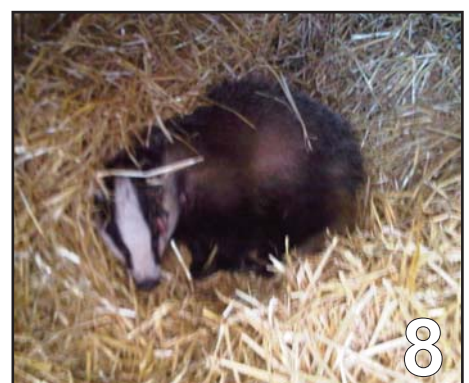
The first section provides general information taken from the NFU ‘Control of Bovine TB Part 2 – Biosecurity’ bulletin, the second part is pig-specific biosecurity.

- Badgers are members of the weasel family and are omnivores. They eat worms and slugs when they are in plentiful supply, small invertebrates, hedgehogs, rabbits and other small mammals, carrion, birds’ eggs, berries and fruits, maize, oats, barley and anything else that is around when food is scarce.
- Badgers will live to an average age of 5 – 8 years and can mate at almost any time of the year.
- Badgers are creatures of habit. They will use the same setts for a number of years, with many large setts having been in existence for hundreds of years.
- Badgers have a sense of smell over 800 times more sensitive than our own. They will use well worn runs emanating from the sett and mark their territory boundary using established latrines and dung pits.
- There is no evidence to suggest that sick animals are ejected from the main sett or family group, but there is some evidence to suggest that infected badgers have a larger home range which may lead them to occupy single hole setts away from the main sett which is often located close to an easy food source.
- It is not possible to tell if a badger is infected with TB just by looking at it.
- Check to see if there are setts being used close to your outdoor paddocks, buildings and feed stores (Photo 2). In addition badgers will live under sheds, in straw stacks (Photo 3) and in barns, check these areas regularly for obvious signs of badger access.
- Many cattle farms site water and feed troughs and salt licks over 4 feet (120 cm) off the ground to prevent badgers accessing them. As this is impossible for pig producers it is essential to implement good biosecurity.



### Practical Biosecurity

- Access to feed and stored grain should be denied wherever possible. Badgers can easily climb 3 feet (91 cm), especially if the surfaces provide grip such as concrete – they are very determined animals.
- If doors and gateways are more than 3 inches (8 cm) off the ground a badger can get under it. If the floor is soft a badger can scrape under a gate so modification with plastic strips (Photo 4) or electric fencing is required. Ensure all grain stores have doors that shut flush together.
- Keep up good house keeping around the feed bin areas (Photo 5), consider feed dust extraction cyclones. Ensure the flow of ad lib feeders is correct and that nothing is broken (Photo 6).
- Keep well maintained fox fence type electric fencing around the most vulnerable areas of your outdoor unit ie the farrowing paddocks, especially if you have ad lib feeding. Research conducted by the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) showed that electric fence wires should be placed at 10 cm, 15 cm, 20 cm and 30 cm intervals to be effective.
- Spray weeds regularly and walk paddocks weekly to check for signs of disturbance or digging.
- Other vulnerable areas include paddocks situated next to wooded areas as these could contain badger setts.
- Other fencing that has greatly reduced mammalian predators in farrowing paddocks is the use of netting positioned one foot from the main electric fence (Photo 7). For more information see BPEX Farm Case Study 10.
- Keeping badger populations away from farrowing areas is critical. If fencing is not an option try not to straw up the farrowing arcs too long before the sows move in as the warm dry bedding is inviting to badgers (Photo 8 - this photo was taken on a pig unit!). In addition keep ad lib feeders well maintained and don't allow waste to sit in empty paddocks.
- If you share any livestock vehicles with cattle producers make sure they are washed and disinfected prior to use on the pig unit.



### The Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Know the law. The Act does not grant any rights, it creates various criminal offences – it is an offence to take, kill, injure or commit cruelty to badgers or interfere with badger setts.

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