

Learning to manage Bovine Tuberculosis: Bringing together the understandings of vets, farmers, charities and the policy process

This research project is part of the PhD degree programme that I am currently undertaking at Lancaster University. It is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council which does not have any commercial interests (www.esrc.ac.uk).

Purpose of the project

This research will bring together local understandings of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) and government official's and scientific advisors' understandings of bTB policies. This is a qualitative social science investigation involving first hand observations and participation (ethnography) in 'real-world' settings in order to understand local perspectives of disease management. Observations will be carried out in different areas regarding bTB: badger cull area, badger vaccination area, low risk area and edge area. It will involve observation and participation in meetings, TB testing, implementation of biosecurity and badger vaccination. Where possible, detailed fieldnotes will be made during and after observation/participation. The research will also involve interviews with people involved in these activities. The results of the research will form the basis for recommendations for future bTB policy and disease management.

What is involved in your participation?

Through interactions with people involved in bTB management, I hope to gain three types of data: observational data of meetings and activities; one-to-one interview data; and, discussion group recordings. I will seek permission to record meetings, conversations and interviews on an audio recording device. As a participant, you can ask me not to record at any time and I will make notes by hand. If you agree to be interviewed, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions, to withdraw from the interview at any point before or during the interview, and to ask me to delete records of the interview. You can also withdraw your data from the project entirely at any time up to three months after the fieldwork is concluded. I do not foresee any risks to your participation in this project. All participation is entirely voluntary.

Protecting anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

Audio files and transcribed text files will be stored in a password protected laptop and the recording device will be stored in a locked drawer in a university office at the Department of Sociology. All data derived from interviews, discussion groups and observation/participation will be anonymised. Anonymising means deleting or disguising all information that can render a person identifiable to an outsider. However, it is possible that participants and their data will be identifiable to people closely familiar with bTB management and the local area, and so complete guarantees cannot be provided. I will transcribe all audio recordings personally. Your name and contact details will be held separately from any interview recording and notes in order to protect your identity. Data will be analysed thematically using data analysis software. Six months after the end of the project I will delete or destroy all records in my possession containing personal information. However, I intend to keep anonymised research records for future research purposes. No personal and private information you share with me will be shared with anyone else unless it involves unlawful activity or the safeguarding of a vulnerable person, in which case it is my legal duty to report it to the police.

End uses of the information provided

The information you provide will be analysed for the purposes of this project. The findings of the research will be written up as a PhD thesis, and a short report for policy makers and other organisations interested in this work. The findings may be published, and they may also be used for teaching and research training. The data will be stored securely for a maximum of ten years. The written work may include direct quotations from the interviews, but individuals will never be named. Please feel free to ask me any further questions you may have about the project. You can also advise me of anything else you would like me to do to protect your privacy.