

Thinking Through Badgers

researching the controversy over bovine tuberculosis and the culling of badgers

Stephan Price

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Summary

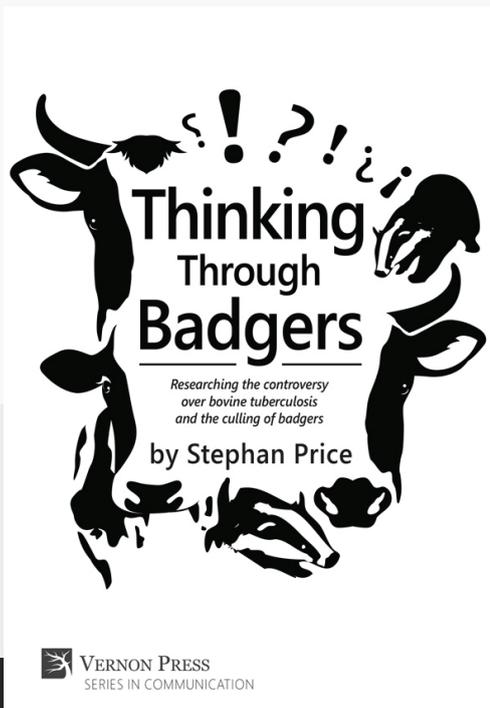
Bovine tuberculosis is seriously damaging the UK dairy and beef industry. Many farmers believe culling badgers must be part of the solution, but in 2013 a record 300,000 people signed a Downing Street petition asking the government to stop planned culls of badgers in Somerset and Gloucestershire, fuelling media controversy and signalling the beginning of a social conflict that was acted out in studios, streets, fields and village halls across England. The four-year trial culls, which began that year, aimed to establish that culling was a viable way of tackling the disease, but the widely divergent experiences and values of policy-makers, farming, conservation and animal welfare supporters means that decades of science on the disease in badgers and the effects of culling has not helped resolve the dispute.

Reporting on original, UK research council-funded social science, this book takes on the challenge of understanding the contrasting views involved. Listening carefully to what the different protagonists have to say, the book unpicks the way science is interpreted to sustain differing conclusions, and considers how social science thinking could contribute. The book develops a critical perspective on the increasingly important literature influenced by new materialism, the social science response to the Science Wars, and explores the extent to which a social movement around opposition to the culls is emerging. In approachable prose, this access-all-areas account describes the struggle to develop understanding through the messy process of research and the difficulties of scientific analysis and philosophical thought. As such, it provides a valuable resource for both research practitioners and teachers within the social sciences, as well as an

accessible way for biological scientists, conservationists and farmers to reflect on the issues around the management of disease in livestock and wildlife.

About the author

In 2013, Stephan Price began work at the University of Exeter on a UK Economic and Social Research Council funded project about the politics and geography of the badger culls. His research and experiences on this project are the basis for this book. Prior to this, Stephan worked at the University of Southampton on environmental sociology projects involving interviews, media analysis and survey work, at the University of Nottingham in a collaboration with a team of biogeographers, and developed a detailed understanding of the British environmental movement through his doctoral study of its influence on UK climate change debates at the University of Kent.



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