



THE Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is looking at bringing an end to its controversial policy that allows the mass culling of badgers. DEFRA has suggested that by the end of 2022, it won't give farmers new licences to kill badgers.

Since 2012, the Government has backed farmers in culling badgers, with the aim of stopping the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB).

Environmental science expert Professor Robbie McDonald, from the University of Exeter, told *First News*: "There is strong scientific evidence that badgers are involved in maintaining bovine tuberculosis, which is a serious disease for cattle and can affect people."

But the National Farmers' Union has said that it wants culls to continue, saying they are "clearly delivering successful results".

However, the effectiveness of culls has been questioned by many scientists. Lord Krebs, who led the largest study

so far of culls, said in 2019 that "all the recent scientific evidence points to a central role of cattle-to-cattle transmission, and focusing on killing badgers is probably a distraction from the main story."

Professor McDonald said: "Evaluating whether [badger culling] works is hard and takes time. It is especially hard knowing if and when to stop, and what might replace it."

The Government aims to vaccinate cattle and badgers to stop the spread of bTB, but a vaccine for cows is still five years away, and badger vaccination is difficult.

Professor McDonald says that "capacity to carry out vaccination is limited and needs to be expanded."



ON 9 February, it's Safer Internet Day in the UK. This year the day's theme is "An internet we trust: exploring reliability in the online world".

Safer Internet Day is an annual event dedicated to celebrating the information and opportunities available online, while also teaching young people about some of the dangers that can be found on the internet.

This year, the day is focused on how we can decide what to trust online, and teaching young people to spot and speak out against harmful and misleading online content.

To get involved, and find advice, games, quizzes, films and more on how you can stay safe online, head to www.saferinternet.org.uk.

DOGS USED TO BE SIBERIAN WOLVES

NEW scientific research published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that all modern-day pet dogs originated from wolves in Ice Age Siberia!

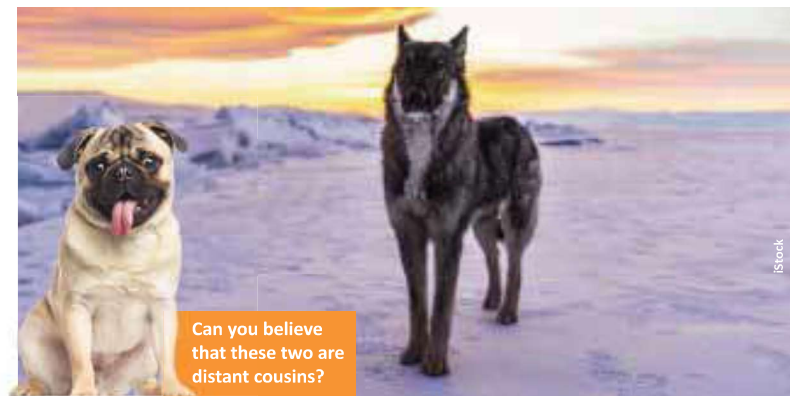
Scientists from Europe and the US looked at DNA samples and examined archaeological evidence.

They found that every dog in the world (including pugs, poodles, dachshunds and Chihuahuas!) is thought to be related to grey wolves from eastern Siberia, which were domesticated (tamed) around 21,000BC.

They believe that during the last Ice Age, around 21,000 to 17,000BC, wolves were forced to rely on human camps for scraps of food, since their usual prey of creatures like reindeer and bison was in decline.

It was then that the wolves began to be domesticated and by 13,000BC were much more like poodles as we know them today.

Humans and dogs crossed from Siberia into the Americas on a strip of land that is now covered by the waters of the Bering Strait.



Can you believe that these two are distant cousins?

4. NEWS IN PICTURES

FirstNews ● Issue 764 ● 5 – 11 February 2021



MADRID, SPAIN

A MURAL showing 16 outstanding diverse women has been saved, after city councillors stepped in to stop it being removed. The mural includes singer-songwriter Nina Simone, American activist Rosa Parks and artist Frida Kahlo.



LONDON, UK

THE London Eye is illuminated with the colour purple, along with many other iconic buildings, for a “national moment” on Holocaust Memorial Day.



PORTHLEVEN, UK

BIG waves break in Porthleven harbour, as the Met Office extended the severe weather warning for Devon and Cornwall.



NEW YORK, USA

THE “wolf moon” rises behind the Brooklyn Bridge. January’s full moon is named after the howling of wolves, hungry due to the lack of food in midwinter.



LITHUANIA

A RECENT heavy snowstorm inspired dozens of residents to build crazy snow sculptures, including this shark. After the storm, people were quick to start sculpting giant octopuses, penguins, owls and even a car.



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It's time to get starry-eyed

LOOK to the skies and spot some stars, because this year's Star Count is here.

CPRE, the countryside charity, is calling on the public to help it count stars in the night sky this month. It wants to see what effect the light from buildings and streetlights is having on our view of our galaxy, the Milky Way.

To take part, all you have to do is pick a clear night between 6 and 14 February, look up at the constellation of Orion and see how many stars you can spot. You can do this from your garden, a balcony or a bedroom window.

Once you've made your count, send your

results to the charity and it'll get busy adding them to a big map of the UK. If it finds areas where people can only spy a few stars and lots of light pollution, it will work with local councils to tackle the problem.

Light pollution doesn't just hinder our magical views of the sky, but it can also affect wildlife and its natural patterns.

Check out how you can join the Star Count, as well as lots of top tips, at www.cpre.org.uk.

SNOW JOKE FOR BINMAN



Should the binman have been sacked? Let us know at first.news/polls

A BINMAN in Herefordshire has lost his job, after kicking the head off a child's snowman.

Nineteen-year-old Callum Woodhouse was caught on a CCTV camera kicking the snowman, while he waited for a bin to empty into his truck.

Mr Woodhouse was later told by Herefordshire Council's waste contractor that he would not be returning to work for them.

But thousands of people disagreed with the decision to sack him. Many said it seemed unfair and that the snowman would have melted away anyway. Others feel the company made the right decision and it was mean-spirited of him. What do you think?

EDITOR'S COMMENT



LAST year's Black Lives Matter protests helped to highlight the racism that many people still sadly have to put up with.

Unfortunately, anonymous social media accounts allow people to send racist abuse, while the social media companies aren't much help when it comes to tracking down those responsible. The good news is that most people think this kind of abuse is totally unacceptable, and the country has shown that it is united in making racism a thing of the past.

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GOOD WEEK FOR...



JIGSAWS

IT turns out many of us have been enjoying jigsaws during life in lockdown. A whopping £100m was made from the sale of jigsaws in the UK in 2020, an increase of 38% from 2019. The best-selling jigsaws were those that have 1,000 pieces.

BAD WEEK FOR...



NAUGHTY CLIMBERS

TWO men who attempted to climb Ben Nevis were fined for breaking lockdown rules when they got stuck and had to be rescued by helicopter. The pair had travelled all the way from Glasgow, and police told the men that their trip definitely wasn't essential.

WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRIC AIRPORT

THE world's first airport for electric aircraft is being built in Coventry in the UK.

Air-One will launch later this year and become the hub for electric vehicles, including flying cars (eVTOLs), air taxis and delivery drones.

The project is being run by urban-Air Port, after it won the



Government's Future Flight Challenge. The aim of the challenge was to develop greener ways to fly. It's hoped this new airport will be able to tackle both congestion and air pollution.

There are plans to develop more than 200 similar sites in the next five years.

EDINBURGH

● Boy runs in memory of dad

A nine-year-old boy has raised £10,000 for a charity that helped his family after his dad died in a car crash. Rory Logg was just three when his dad Richard died on Boxing Day in 2014. Rory has been doing regular runs around his local area in memory of his dad and to raise money for Child Bereavement UK. Mum Lorraine said: "When I knew Richard was going to die, I called Child Bereavement UK and they sent me all the information on how to tell young children that a parent has died. They have helped me so much over the years."



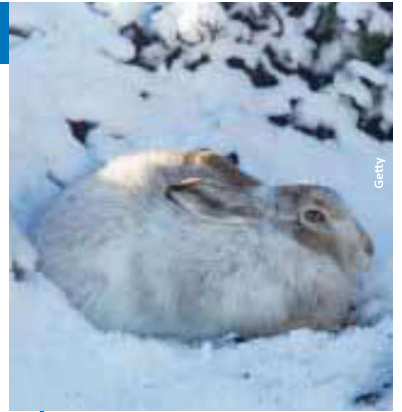
Lorraine Logg/Just Giving

Rory (left) says his brother Thomas wants to join him on the fundraising runs next year

DERBYSHIRE

● Mountain hares at risk

A conservation group has said that the last group of mountain hares in England could be at risk due to global warming. Around 2,500 mountain hares live in the Peak District. Nida Al-Fulaij, from the People's Trust for Endangered Species, said: "The Peak District's colder climate is ideal for mountain hares, who have adapted perfectly. But, with the onset of warmer and more erratic weather, these hares could be in trouble. We can't let them die out."



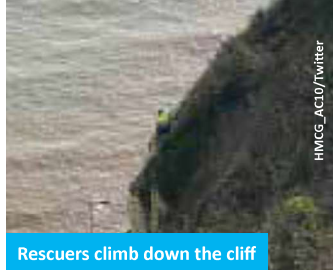
Getty

CUMBRIA

● School theft shock

A school manager stole more than £100,000 worth of supplies to fund his gambling addiction. Wayne Collins, who worked at St Benedict's Catholic High School in Whitehaven, was responsible for ordering school supplies. Mary Lowrey, the school's business director, said Mr Collins had "stolen from the school and from the hard-working children that attend".

DEVON



HMGG_ACI0/Twitter

Rescuers climb down the cliff

● Cliff fall escape

A woman rescued after falling more than 30m (100ft) down a cliff was miraculously uninjured. Coastguards from Beer and Lyme Regis found the woman on a ledge about halfway down the 70m-tall (230ft) cliff. She had lost her shoes in the fall and was treated for shock, but suffered no physical injuries.

WILTSHIRE

● 'Wonder Woman' gets award

A six-year-old girl with a muscle-wasting disease has been given a Points of Light award that recognises "outstanding individuals making a difference where they live". Carmela Chillery-Watson dressed as Wonder Woman and walked 30km in 30 days for Muscular Dystrophy UK. Her charity walks raised more than £54,000 and even had a donation from Gal Gadot, who plays Wonder Woman in the films. Upon receiving her award, Carmela said: "This is awesome news, I can't believe it, it's so amazing."

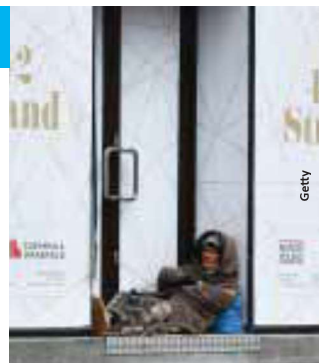


carmelachillerywatson/instagram

GREATER LONDON

● Homeless figures up

The number of people who live on the streets in London has gone up by 23% in recent months. Figures from the Greater London Authority show that in the last three months of 2020, 412 people were living on the streets, compared to 336 three months before. Jon Sparkes, from charity Crisis, said the "statistics paint a worrying picture of homelessness across our capital".



Getty

BERKSHIRE



RavinderSinghKA/Twitter

● Nobel nomination

A charity in Maidenhead has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Khalsa Aid, founded in 1999 by Ravinder Singh (above), is based upon the Sikh principle: "Recognise the whole human race as one." Its work has involved helping refugees and people affected by natural disasters across the world. In the UK, Khalsa Aid has provided aid to flood-damaged areas and given meals to hospitals fighting COVID-19. Ravinder said the nomination was "very, very uplifting" and a great acknowledgment of the "dedication and compassion" of the charity's volunteers.



Khalsa_Aid/Twitter

