



FROM THE PRESIDENT: PETER KENDALL

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peter Kendall', written in a cursive style.

Culling of Badgers in England

Thank you for your letter regarding the culling of badgers in England.

Under EU law the vaccination of cattle with Bacille Calmette Guerin (BCG) vaccine is prohibited. Vaccination is prohibited as cattle would still need to be tested and there is no validated test to differentiate vaccinated animals from infected animals. If we were to vaccinate without the EU law being amended it could result in the ban of live cattle and cattle products being exported (meat and dairy). The value of our meat exports, for example, was worth in the region of £270m in 2010.

A test is being developed to differentiate vaccinated animals from infected animals; however it needs to gain international validation before it can be accepted. The test requires solid scientific evidence of its effectiveness and safety, which could take years. In addition to this EU negotiations are likely to be a difficult process as the majority of member states are bovine TB free.

It is also worth noting that whilst cattle vaccination could play an important part in the eradication policy it is NOT 100% effective. Experimental evidence shows that vaccination appears not to have any beneficial effect in already infected cattle so the earlier vaccination occurs the better i.e. before an animal becomes infected. The BCG vaccine provides about 50% protection against *M. bovis* infection, the remaining 50% are susceptible to infection which is a particular problem if infected wildlife remain.

The risk of humans contracting bovine TB from cattle is very low and less than 1% of confirmed TB cases in humans are caused by bovine TB. Despite the low risk we must have robust measures in place to protect humans from contracting the disease. If we were to take no action over bovine TB, we would see an increase in clinical TB in cattle this would not only present an animal welfare issue but risks spreading the disease to other animals within the herd, to those handling these cattle and to other species. Under EU law we are obliged to put in place control measures to prevent the spread of bovine TB.

The Irish Government have been conducting a badger control programme as part of its eradication programme and the numbers of Irish reactors (cattle who have reacted positively to



the TB test) has fallen by a third in the past three years. In 2008 Ireland had just under 30,000 reactor cattle, in 2009 they had just under 24,000 and in 2010 they had just over 20,000 reactor cattle. In New Zealand possums are the main cause of TB infection in cattle and deer herds. Since possum control was reinstated in the early nineties New Zealand has seen a 94% reduction in the number of herds being infected with TB.

This terrible disease is continuing to have a devastating impact both financially and emotionally on many farming families, not to mention the increasing costs to government, which have reached £100m year. It is clear that this country will not eradicate bovine TB unless we tackle the disease within our wildlife.

Yours sincerely
Peter.

Peter Kendall
President