6th September 2016

Dear Constituent,

RE: BADGERS AND TUBERCULOSIS

Thank you for contacting me about controlling the spread of bovine TB.

Bovine TB is the greatest animal health threat to the UK and causes devastation and distress for farmers and rural communities across the country. Dealing with it is costing taxpayers £100 million each year. The Government is delivering a 25-year strategy to eradicate this disease and protect the UK's dairy and beef industries. This includes strengthening cattle testing and movement controls, improving biosecurity and controlling badger populations where TB is rife.

Cattle movement controls and testing are being strengthened to stop infection spreading between herds, as is the regime for tackling the disease among other farmed animals, such as alpacas.

The Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme has supported badger vaccination projects on the borders of the high-risk areas, but there is a worldwide shortage of the BCG vaccine. Because of the need to prioritise available stocks for humans, and in line with the Welsh Government's decision, attempts to source it for badger vaccination have been suspended.

As part of a comprehensive strategic approach, culling continues to play a vital role. Overseas experience in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland shows that to eradicate the disease, the problem must be tackled in both cattle and wildlife. Badger control operations in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset have all been successful in meeting their targets, and, following advice from the Chief Veterinary Office, seven additional licences have now been granted for parts of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Cornwall, Devon and Dorset.

I believe that all necessary measures must be used to eradicate this devastating disease, and I am pleased to note early success. The Low Risk Area, covering over half of England, is on track to be officially TB-free by the end of 2019, which would be the first time this has been achieved anywhere in England.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Quin