



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26<sup>th</sup> March 2021

*Dear Conifer,*

**RE: BADGERS & BOVINE TB**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of controlling the spread of bovine TB; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I know that the badger cull has been a controversial component of the bovine TB eradication strategy, but I understand that the initial areas that have been subject to a cull have seen a significant reduction in incidence of the disease. Of course, no one wants to keep culling badgers for a moment longer than is necessary.

Ministers only ever envisaged that the badger cull would be a phase in the strategy to reduce the weight of the disease in the wildlife population. I am pleased that the ongoing consultation sets out how they intend to phase out culling and accelerate the next phases of the strategy, especially improved diagnostic testing. This consultation also includes proposals to stop issuing intensive cull licences for new areas after 2022 and would enable new licences to be cut short after two or three years based on a review of the latest scientific evidence at that time.

Under the new proposals, any new supplementary cull licences, which are granted in regions after intensive culls are complete, would be restricted to two years and would not be reissued afterwards. I understand that some form of culling would continue to be an option in exceptional circumstances to address any local disease flare-ups. I am glad to hear that you, like others in the constituency of Corby & East Northamptonshire, of which I am proud to serve, have taken part in this consultation exercise and I can assure you that Ministers will consider all views on this issue very carefully.

In parallel with the consultation, Ministers are also calling for views on possible future measures to accelerate bovine TB eradication in England, such as further improvements to testing, encouraging increased uptake of farm biosecurity measures, and rewarding low risk cattle purchasing behaviour.

It is also encouraging that work on developing a deployable cattle bovine TB vaccine continues at pace and is on track to be completed within the next five years, with field trials scheduled to commence in the coming months.



There is no single answer to tackling bovine TB, but by deploying a range of policy interventions, we can turn the tide on this terrible disease and achieve the long-term objective of eradicating it by 2038. I have, for your interest, enclosed a 'Dear Colleague' letter which has been sent to MPs from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, the Rt. Hon George Eustice MP, which explains all this in further detail.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*  
*Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**





House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

To all Conservative MPs in England

28 January 2021

Dear Colleague,

**Announcing the public consultation on the next phase of bovine tuberculosis eradication**

I am writing to you following the launch of a public consultation on the next phase of the Government's strategy to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England by 2038.

The bTB eradication strategy we published in 2014 is making progress. We are now seeing sustained improvements in the High-Risk Area covering the South West and Much of the Midlands. The badger cull has been a controversial component of that strategy since 2014 but the initial areas that have been subject to a cull have seen a significant reduction in incidence of the disease typically in the range of 37 to 66 percent. Of course, no one wants to keep culling badgers for a moment longer than is necessary. Almost seventy percent of the High Risk Area is now subject to a cull. Over the next year or two, any remaining areas where there is an epidemiological case for a cull will have started.

We only ever envisaged that the badger cull would be a phase in our strategy to reduce the weight of the disease in the wildlife population and the eight week consultation we published yesterday sets out how we intend to phase out culling and accelerate the next phases of the strategy, especially improved diagnostic testing.

This includes proposals to stop issuing intensive cull licences for new areas after 2022 and would enable new licences to be cut short after two or three years based on a review of the latest scientific evidence at that time. Under the new proposals, any new supplementary cull licences - which are granted in regions after intensive culls are complete - would be restricted to two years and would not be reissued afterwards.

In parallel to the consultation, we are also calling for views on possible future measures to accelerate bTB eradication in England, such as further improvements to testing, encouraging increased uptake of farm biosecurity measures and rewarding low risk cattle purchasing behaviour. Our call for views also discusses ways we can continue to adapt how we reward farmers for 'best practice', in line with our wider agricultural transition plan.

**Rt Hon George Eustice MP**  
Member of Parliament for Camborne, Redruth and Hayle



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London SW1A 0AA

Work on developing a deployable cattle bTB vaccine continues at pace and is on track to be completed within the next five years. Our goal is to deliver on the significant investment we have made to date in developing this vaccine and a candidate diagnostic test that can differentiate between vaccinated and infected animals. Field trials to support the authorisation of a cattle vaccine are scheduled to commence in the coming months.

There is no single answer to tackling bTB, but by deploying a range of policy interventions, we can turn the tide on this terrible disease and achieve our long-term objective of eradicating it by 2038. The link to the consultation can be found at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/bovine-tb-2020/eradication-of-btb-england/>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Eustice".

**RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP**