



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Badger Cull and Bovine TB Strategy

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

Bovine TB is the greatest animal health threat to the UK. It not only has a devastating impact on our beef and dairy farms, but causes harm and distress to infected cattle and costs taxpayers £100 million each year.

Ministers are delivering a 25-year strategy to eradicate this disease and protect the UK's dairy and beef industries. This includes one of the most rigorous cattle surveillance programmes in the world, strong movement controls, promoting good biosecurity and badger control where the disease is rife.

I am pleased to say that the Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme, which was suspended owing to a worldwide shortage of the BCG vaccine, has reopened for expressions of interest with projects due to start in the spring. This will support the creation of a protected badger population in uninfected areas. A contract has also been awarded to deliver a new bTB advisory service, offering clear, practical advice to help farmers protect their herds and manage the impacts of a TB breakdown.

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. Operations continue with new and supplementary licences issued in high-risk areas.

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.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP