



Dear constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about badger culling.

I recognise the crippling impact of bovine TB on farmers whose cattle herds have been devastated by the disease, many of whom are suffering great economic and emotional hardship as a result. I equally recognise the upset and distress that many feel at what they see as unnecessary culling of badgers.

Many scientists and others consider that the evidence is far from clear-cut that culling badgers is effective as a way of controlling bovine TB. In that context, I believe we should be pursuing a transparent strategy that is based on sound scientific evidence and open to scrutiny, as well as investing properly in recommended non-lethal interventions to reduce the incidence of this terrible disease in cattle. We must act to stop the spread of bovine TB, but I do not believe that culling badgers is the answer and I have therefore long supported calls for the Government to end the badger cull.

In 2018, an independent review of the Government's long-term bovine TB eradication strategy called for a greater emphasis on controlling the disease in cattle and said that moving from lethal to non-lethal control of the disease in badgers is highly desirable.

In response to the review, the Government said in March 2020 that the current intensive culling policy would begin to be phased out in the next few years, gradually replaced by government-supported badger vaccination and surveillance. This year, it said that the development of a deployable cattle bovine TB vaccine is on track to be completed within the next five years.

I am worried that the expansion of culling areas seen last year undermines the new strategy for bovine TB set out in March, and in many areas could result in badgers vaccinated through taxpayer funded schemes being killed by taxpayer funded cull companies. Indeed, I believe the Government could be in breach of its international obligations under the Bern Convention to protect vulnerable wildlife.

I am calling on the Government to end the cull, alongside strong measures to reduce bovine TB such as improved cattle testing, vaccinating badgers and better controls on the movement of herds.

Thank you once again for contacting me and sharing your views.

Yours sincerely,

Mary