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The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP
House of Commons
London
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Your ref: 01101954
Our ref: MC 188168/GH

30th June 2010

From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP

Dear Tessa,

Thank you for your letter of 14 June enclosing an example copy of an e-mail you have received from a number of your constituents about badger culling and the control of bovine TB.

Bovine TB is a serious problem for the farming industry. There has been a long-term increasing trend in TB incidence in cattle in GB and in 2009 over 25,000 cattle were slaughtered for TB control purposes in England. It is predominantly a disease of cattle but can affect a range of species and evidence shows that there is a significant reservoir of infection in badgers. The disease is transmitted between cattle, between badgers, and between badgers and cattle. Evidence suggests that without addressing the problem in the badger population, it will not be possible to eradicate TB in cattle. Therefore, no one single control method will eradicate TB; only a 'toolbox' of different methods aimed at tackling the disease in both cattle and badgers will be effective.

The Coalition Government has committed that, as part of a package of measures, we will introduce a carefully-managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine TB.

We need to consider all the issues carefully, including the scientific evidence, to work out the detail of the package to ensure we get it right. We will be looking at vaccine and culling options as part of that package.

*Yours sincerely,
Caroline*

CAROLINE SPELMAN MP