

Farmers For Action

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FAO Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, NI Assembly

Submission on the Review of Bovine TB in Northern Ireland

To Whom it May Concern;

Farmers For Action will make the case in this submission that bovine TB in Northern Ireland is now a political problem and has been for recent decades and not a veterinary problem without a solution.

1. The facts about bovine TB in the UK:-
 - a) The Isle of Man has no badgers and no TB!
 - b) Scotland has no TB other than check incidents of imported animals and does have badgers free of TB. This situation extends into the Northern Counties of England.
 - c) The South West of England and Wales is the worst infected area of the UK, followed by the rest of England in a reducing county basis as you go north towards Scotland and then the Northern Ireland situation.
 - d) Bovine TB was drastically reduced and almost eliminated in many infected areas decades back when infected badger culling was carried out in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
 - e) Recent trial culls of infected badgers in hot spot areas of Southern Ireland have proved successful.
 - f) The consequences of decades of inaction on TB infected badger culling where required across GB and NI have manifested themselves worst in the South West of England and Wales as follows; in these areas bovine TB is now endemic in deer, is being found in pigs, sheep, goats, lamas, alpacas and with at

least 35 recorded human incidents of bovine TB in the UK in 2009, one of the most recent incidents being a young child near Bristol. NOTE – DEFRA figures for the above TB infections in other species are not accurate and do not fully reflect the true number of infected animals as there is a quirk in their collection of data - FFA can provide a witness to this effect.

- g) Brussels enforces an irradiation policy on bovine TB EU member state wide, successive UK governments have white-washed the EU as to their compliance, however, this is now coming to an end in the form of reduced compensation from Brussels resulting in DARD now trying to reduce compensation at the farmers expense. A totally unacceptable situation!

2. The Political History of TB –

- a) This stems from Westminster during the 70's, with the UK emerging as a much more affluent place to live, as a result, out of the wealthier masses has come organisations such as the so called badger protection organisations, which in turn represent huge voting power which no political party in Westminster dare lose. This situation has since the 70's stopped successive governments taking decisive commonsense veterinary advised action to cull infected badgers in infected areas to halt bovine TB. This situation has rolled over into Northern Ireland until now, where Northern Ireland politicians collectively could change this politically unforgivable waste of taxpayers money over votes.
- b) Inaction on a TB infected badger cull by the devolved Government of Northern Ireland is now responsible for bovine TB following the Westminster inaction route. The Northern Ireland Assembly has now allowed bovine TB to move into the deer species with one farm cull already having been carried out leaving the now wild deer a huge problem.
- c) The Northern Ireland Veterinary Service, Dundonald House, Belfast, finds itself in the awkward position of having to bend to political will, as well as veterinary surgeons on the ground; i) knowing that an infected badger cull would head Northern Ireland on course to eradicating TB and ii) those same vets on the ground financially would have trouble maintaining their rural large animal practices without TB testing income, due to poor farm gate prices providing falling returns from farmers.

- d) The only scientifically proven practical solution currently on offer that can be implemented immediately and make a difference is controlled culling of TB infected badgers in infected areas of Northern Ireland. FFA have already publicly stated that the Northern Ireland Assembly is in the unique position for MLA's to come together and unanimously must support a Northern Ireland TB infected badger cull immediately, i) thereby, carrying out Brussels wishes for the eradication of TB; ii) any votes lost due to an infected NI badger cull would therefore have no effect on any individual party or independent at the next election; iii) MLA's can no longer justify money going into the removal of TB reactor cattle, while hospitals remain devoid of Doctors, Sisters, Nurses and beds; iv) NI farmers can not carry the cost of reduced payments for TB reactor cattle while Northern Ireland's politicians and DARD continue to try and white-wash Brussels and the Northern Ireland taxpayer.

FFA intend to go on record over the next five years stating that any lack of political will in Northern Ireland to immediately implement a DARD cull from this day forward of infected badgers in hotspot areas of Northern Ireland will result in the bovine TB situation getting worse and spreading to other species and possibly humans in other words following the South West of England and Wales' experience. No Cull, No Change!

Now is the time for Northern Ireland MLA's to show what they are made of, to show that they are worthy of the votes of all the commonsense people of Northern Ireland, to show them that they are capable of making decisions for the greater good of rural Northern Ireland.