



March 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about badgers and controlling the spread of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB).

bTB is an infectious and contagious disease with a complex epidemiology, which can spread within and between cattle and badger populations. It is important, therefore, to pursue a wide range of evidence-led interventions as part of the Government's strategy to achieve Officially TB Free status for England by 2038.

I am encouraged that routine and targeted bTB testing of cattle herds, movement restrictions on infected herds, and rapid detection and removal of cattle testing positive, remain the foundations of the Government's strategy. I am assured that ministers are committed to supporting and strengthening biosecurity to limit the likelihood and severity of bTB on cattle farms.

Like you, I also do not want the culling of a protected species to continue indefinitely. I am aware that all badger culling operations are licenced by Natural England. I welcome that as wider measures such as cattle vaccines are developed, the Government will start to phase out badger culling in England. As set out in the Government's response to the January 2021 consultation on proposals to eradicate bTB, no new intensive cull licences will be issued after 2022. I know that supplementary badger culling licences will be restricted to a maximum of two years.

Further, I am glad that the Government is working to develop a deployable cattle bTB vaccine. This work is part of a substantial and wide-ranging research and development programme, and I understand that it is on track to be completed by 2025. If the field trials are successful, farmers and vets will move a step closer to being able to vaccinate their animals against the disease, helping to save thousands of cattle every year that would have otherwise been culled to prevent the spread of bTB.

As part of the Government's move towards wider badger vaccination, I welcome that my ministerial colleagues are introducing several schemes and initiatives. This includes a five-year vaccination scheme in East Sussex, which aims to pilot the deployment of large-scale vaccination by the local farming community. I am also glad that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is bolstering Government capability to deploy badger vaccination in areas where intensive badger culling has ended, as well as exploring new ways and opportunities to support and incentivise more farmer-led approaches to vaccinate badgers. Over 1,400 badgers have been vaccinated across England since May 2021.

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 the long-term objective of eradicating it by 2038.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
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Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**