

P-05-747 TB Testing of Cattle – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 29.03.17

Petitions Committee
Chamber and Commerce Service
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff

29 March 2017

Dear Sir

I am delighted that the Petitions Committee have considered my petition regarding the proposed six monthly Tb testing of cattle. I am also pleased that I have the opportunity to respond to the Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Committee but I can only say that I was very disappointed its content.

There was a failure to address the objective of the petition, which was to point out the problems that six monthly testing will cause. Most farmers try to incorporate a test into their work regime so that it causes the least disruption to the stock and involve the least amount of time. Her proposals for six monthly testing will, inevitably, increase costs to farm businesses, increase stress on the stock, have health and safety implications for those carrying out the test, and cause logistical problems in gathering stock when a test falls when the animals are at grass.

The Cabinet Secretary must be aware of these difficulties from the responses to the consultation, but has not addressed them in her response to my petition. Everyone shares her ambition to eradicate Tb in Wales. Figures released by her office show that 9,975 cattle were slaughtered in 2016. The badger found dead survey shows that in my own county of Monmouthshire 20% of those badgers tested were infected. Therefore the only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the current regime isn't fully effective, and it is unreasonable to load more testing onto farmers whilst ignoring the reservoir in the wildlife. Many farmers have stated that they will stop keeping cattle if six monthly testing is implemented, which cannot be good for the industry in the long term, or those businesses that rely on agriculture for their income, and surely it is the responsibility of Welsh Government to consider this in any new policy.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Bowyer