



Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee

Tuesday 11 March 2025

The Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
London

Subject: preventing outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and African swine fever in the UK

Dear Sue,

Thank you for your timely response to my letter of 11 February regarding foot and mouth disease (FMD), and your detailed answer to my question of when the decision was made to ban the import of relevant goods from Germany and when port health authorities were informed.

Certain questions, however, were not answered. These relate to Defra's IT system import of products, animals, food and feed system (IPAFFS). I would therefore be grateful if you could provide a response to the questions below by 21 March.

- **When was IPAFFS successfully updated [to reflect the policy change made on 10 January] and operating as intended?**
- **What quantity of prohibited goods was able to enter the country in the time between controls being approved [10 January] and IPAFFS being updated?**
- **What steps have you taken to track and remove prohibited products and what assessment have you made of the potential risk of those products to the UK?**

In your letter of 24 February, you state:

PHAs [port health authorities] were able to put holds on all impacted commodities immediately from Germany. [...] Meanwhile, the IT system (IPAFFS) was updated to align with what was already happening at the border. Working with officials, I recognise that there were challenges in compiling the many thousands of lines of impacted commodity codes at pace. The committee can

House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

efracom@parliament.uk
+44 (0)20 7219 1119
Social: @houseofcommons
parliament.uk

AMC



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

rest assured that the department is working to reduce these timelines where possible, in contingency of any future and similar scenarios.

The Committee has received and published evidence (APH0162) from Helen Buckingham, a Chartered Environmental Health Practitioner and regulatory consultant with connections to port health and local authorities throughout the country. The following excerpts are of particular note.

14th Jan @ 11:45 Defra PHA Forum. Defra is asked if there will be any changes to TODCOF to prevent cases from auto clearing. Defra say they are looking into what they can do.

15th Jan @ 16:00 Association of Port Health Authorities meeting attended by PHAs and Defra. PHA raised concerns around loads which have entered GB, by-passed the port and gone inland. Defra confirm they are aware of situations where this has happened.

16th Jan Email [...] from PHA Engagement Team confirming that changes had been successfully loaded into IPAFFS for 100% inspection rate on relevant commodities.

21st Jan @ 11:45 Defra PHA Forum, attended by PHAs. Defra informs PHAs that they are aware of increased occurrence of consignments not turning up at BCPs when they should be. Defra is asked by PHA about TODCOF and what to do about those goods which entered before the changes were made to IPAFFS.

I sought clarity on these matters from the Chief Veterinary Officer when she appeared before the Committee on 4 March. The Chief Veterinary Officer stated that she did not know when IPAFFS was updated to reflect the policy change made on 10 January and was not aware of reports that some consignments were bypassing controls. On what action is being taken to remove prohibited products, she stated that work is being conducted by the APHA, Food Standards Agency and local authorities; she had "no further detail" other than that she was aware of a live animal commodity that was assessed as "very low risk". The Chief Vet reiterated that from the point of being informed of rule changes on 10 January, PHAs were manually checking common health entry documents (CHEDs) and holding relevant consignments at BCPs.

Foot and mouth disease is understandably a great source of public concern. The UK has been FMD free since 2007 and learning lessons from our response to this outbreak in Germany is integral to ensuring that remains the case. My Committee will continue to

ame



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

hold your Department to account on this and to support efforts to strength contingency plans.

On a separate but related note, my Committee is aware that the end of the financial year is less than a month away and that, at the time of writing, no new funding settlement has been agreed with Dover Port Health Authority (DPHA), which is at the frontline of enforcing personal import controls. The work conducted by DPHA is integral to preventing FMD and African swine fever from reaching the UK. African swine fever could cost the UK £10 million to £100 million; FMD could once again cost us billions of pounds. I imagine that these figures dwarf what is being negotiated between your parties. **I once again urge you to ensure DPHA has appropriate funding so that its support of Border Force can continue.**

Your letter of 24 February addresses broader points relating to the Committee's inquiry into animal and plant health and biosecurity at the border. Thank you for this information. I look forward to hearing more from you on these matters when you appear before the Committee on 6 May.

Yours faithfully,
Alistair Carmichael

**Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee**