



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Alastair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs Committee
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
SW1 0AA
efracom@parliament.uk

January 2026

Dear Alastair,

Thank you for your letter of 16 December 2025. Please find answers to your questions below.

Firstly, you asked for further detail on Defra's attitude tracker. The attitude tracker is a survey for internal use only, designed to inform and evaluate communications. The survey is conducted online by our research agency, with a nationally representative sample of 2,079 UK adults. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults.

Our insights team has included the following question since August 2025:

Which, if any, of the following do you think you can bring back to England from Europe?

Select all that apply

- a) Clothes
- b) Shoes
- c) Meat
- d) Dairy products
- e) Fruit and vegetables
- f) Plants
- g) Cosmetics
- h) Don't know

The proportion of respondents that thought they could bring back meat and dairy products was already low in August 2025 (6% for meat; 8% for dairy products) and stayed at a similar level in November 2025.

Secondly, you asked about predicted timelines for Veterinary Surgeons Act reform. The Department expects that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will publish its final report on veterinary services for household pets in Spring 2026. Any substantive remedies it makes (e.g. Orders) will be announced at that point and come into force by the end of 2026. There will be a lead time for implementation of each of the remedies, usually of either three or six months depending on the size of the organisation. More details on the CMA's timelines and provisional findings can be found [here](#). We will respond to their report in due course.

Delivering new legislation to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA) will require bidding for a Bill slot through the Parliamentary Business and Legislation (PBL) process ahead of each Parliamentary session. We are aiming to put in a bid for a Bill slot in the third session of this Parliament. Turning a Bill into an Act can then take up to a year moving through both Houses before it becomes law. There would likely then be secondary legislation afterwards. We, therefore, expect that any CMA remedies would form a stopgap in certain important areas while we work on a complete overhaul of the VSA.

In addition, during the evidence session on 9 December I offered to provide further information regarding testing on vertebrate animals. Under UK REACH, testing on vertebrate animals shall only be taken as a last resort or exceptional circumstance, and guidance is available to UK REACH registrants to minimise animal testing. The legal framework in the UK requires that animals are only ever used in science where there are no alternatives, where the number of animals used is the minimum needed to achieve the scientific benefit, and where the potential harm to animals is limited to that needed to achieve the scientific benefit. As part of initial inquiries, registrants submit data on testing protocols and regulators use this to determine whether appropriate substitutions can or have been made. As part of a testing proposal submission, registrants must outline the steps they have taken to consider adaptations and alternatives. If a test on vertebrates is proposed, they must explain why an adaptation or alternative approach was not suitable to meet the information requirement.

Thank you again for writing to me, and I trust this response has answered your queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S Hayman', written in a cursive style.

BARONESS HAYMAN OF ULLOCK
MINISTER FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AND BIOSECURITY