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From Lord de Mauley
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science

Thank you for your letter of 21 May to the Secretary of State about the release of European beavers in England. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

There are currently no plans to include beavers in schedule 2 to the Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. When a previously native species that is considered a European protected species reoccupies and becomes 'established' in territory that is considered part of the natural range, it should be afforded the appropriate protection under the Habitat Regulations, and added to schedule 2 of these regulations. As the release of beavers in Scotland is a trial, wild beavers there are not considered 'established' in Great Britain so these provisions do not currently apply.

Once the Scottish beaver trial is complete, which is expected in 2015, and Scottish ministers have decided whether to re-introduce the beaver there, we will have to reconsider whether the species should be listed in schedule 2. This will also be the time to consider what options are available to mitigate any impacts of the beavers.

Also, pending the results of the Scottish trial, and in view of uncertainties about upstream flooding caused by the European beavers, it remains our policy that it would be premature to issue a licence to release beavers to the wild in England should an application be made.

Releasing beavers into the wild in England without a licence is an offence and we are vigilant to the risk of any infected beaver introducing the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* (EM) into the United Kingdom, which is currently free of EM. Loss of this status could have serious public health implications.



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Therefore, with regard to the beavers currently in the River Otter, doing nothing is not an option. At present the best option appears to be recapture, testing for EM and rehoming in a secure environment to reduce this risk. There are, however, no plans whatsoever to cull these or any other beavers.

We hope that, because of the potential health risks, landowners will allow Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency staff on to their land to capture the animals. However, if that fails we have powers for access/capture to test animals for zoonosis.

Yr sincerely

Roger de Manley