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From Lord Taylor of Holbeach
Parliamentary Under Secretary

Our ref: MC277751/MP

27^a July 2012

Dear Elizabeth

Thank you for your email of 3 July enclosing a copy of one from your constituent, [REDACTED] about avian influenza. I am replying as the Duty Minister during the Parliamentary recess period.

The current Defra research and development programme covers projects on the prevention and control of a number of diseases that pigs are susceptible to, including influenza, salmonella, Classical Swine Fever, African Swine Fever, and Foot and Mouth Disease.

Defra-funded influenza research includes work to better understand the disease dynamics, pathogenesis and viral survival of avian influenza, as well as research to investigate transmission mechanisms of avian influenza between avian/mammalian species.

Defra also funds more general research with relevance to pig farmers. This includes research being put into place to aid in the preparation of disease control guidance for UK pig farmers for diseases such as salmonella (and others).

Further information on all Defra-funded research can be found at:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/>

Defra has a UK Avian Influenza Survey Plan, covering both poultry and wild birds. Samples are taken from poultry across the UK to test for the presence of H5 or H7 avian influenza and samples are taken from dead wild birds on selected reserves to test for the presence of H5N1, the strain of most concern. Dead wild birds are also tested where members of the public report five or more dead birds in one place to the Defra Helpline. We do not have a policy of culling wild birds as a disease control measure, as it is not considered an effective control measure. However, where H5N1 is confirmed in wild birds, extra steps can be taken to minimise the risk of transmission to pigs.

The Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain contains further information, including our culling policy:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/01/24/pb13701-avian-disease-control-strategy/>

Where highly pathogenic avian influenza is confirmed on premises, our policy is to cull all poultry. Pigs will be tested for disease, and a veterinary risk assessment carried out to determine what further action to take.

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LORD TAYLOR OF HOLBEACH