From: [redacted] (Defra)
Sent: 04 June 2014 12:06
To: [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (AHVLA); [redacted] (Defra); [redacted] (AHVLA); [redacted] (NE); [redacted] (NE); [redacted] (Defra)
Cc: [redacted] (NE); [redacted] (AHVLA); [redacted] (AHVLA); [redacted] (Non-Defra); [redacted] (Non-Defra)
Subject: River Otter Beavers - summary of HAIRS discussions

All,

I attended HAIRS yesterday, outlined the background to the situation, the various legal, policy and financial issues, and raised a number of points on our behalf, based on some suggestions kindly provided by[redacted]. In summary the discussion and responses were as follows, and I have copied in [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] in case they feel I have mis-stated anything:

- **PHE attitude to the (potential) Public Health Risk** – PHE remain highly risk averse with respect to the possibility of our losing our freedom from EM. We did not get into case numbers across the EU (suspect [redacted] will have some of these from previous negotiations with Commission), but although numbers are not I think high, individually they are very expensive to manage (not to mention the adverse outcomes on the health of the individual). However, PHE accept that the main risk of an incursion is likely to be through international movements of pets, both legal and illegal (the latter presumably being more likely not to observe the treatment regime). Therefore they are not convinced that the 3 Devon beavers necessarily represent a significant increase in overall risk (plus the fact that there are free-living beavers of unknown status in Scotland – see below).

  PHE are also concerned that our relatively high fox population (especially in urban areas) compared to many other MS means that the potential for human exposure is greater in the UK if we lost our disease freedom.

- **Scotland** – any licensed releases are of Norwegian origin and therefore theoretically free of EM. However, there is also a significant free-living population (approx. 150) in the Tayside catchment area, not all of whose provenance is known. This has existed for up to 10 years. I am not sure if the relative percentages of Norwegian vs Bavarian origin of these beavers is known ([redacted]?). Scottish Government manage the risk by via a rolling capture and diagnosis programme (I think a combination of ultrasound scanning and Laparoscopy?). Again, not sure how many captured annually and if negative ones are re-released. [redacted] has agreed to do a summary of

the Scottish position and policy rationale - we did not set a timescale, but [redacted] realises that we are having to actively develop our position.

We also need to take this into account, as if we maintain our recapture policy line, we will need to justify why this is different from Scotland's.

- **Failure to capture –** we discussed this possibility, and the difficulty it raises if having raised the public health risk argument we are unable to actually mitigate the risk by capturing the beavers. I think it is fair to say no specific conclusions were reached about what the next steps should be.

- **Tularaemia –** [redacted] (AHVLA Wildlife expert) also mentioned that beavers in Sweden are believed to be asymptomatic excreters of Tularaemia. See summary pasted in from Wikipedia below. Not sure if [redacted]'s information is peer reviewed data or anecdotal. Sweden has 20 – 50 human cases per year but there is no proven link to beavers although presumably they would be contaminating the aquatic environment. Status of Norwegian (and for that matter I suppose Bavarian) beavers is unknown. [redacted] – feel free to add anything.

  Tularemia (or **tularaemia**; also known as **Pahvant Valley plague**,[1] **rabbit fever**,[1] **deer fly fever**, and **Ohara's fever**[2]) is a serious infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*.[3] A gram-negative, nonmotile, pleomorphic coccobacillus, the bacterium has several subspecies with varying degrees of virulence. The most important of those is *F. tularensis tularensis* (Type A), which is found in lagomorphs (rabbits, hares and pikas) in North America, and it is highly virulent in humans and domestic rabbits. *F. tularensis palaearctica* (Type B) occurs mainly in aquatic rodents (beavers, muskrats) in North America and in hares and small rodents in northern Eurasia. It is less virulent for humans and rabbits.[4] The primary vectors are ticks and deer flies, but the disease can also be spread through other arthropods.[3] The disease is named after Tulare County, California.

  Clearly this has the potential to raise the health risk but presumably would apply to all beavers not just those on the Otter. Given the current lack of knowledge I am not sure we should mention this as our answer to most questions is likely to be "don't know", but I thought others should be aware and we may wish to consider it in any testing programme (in Scotland too [redacted]?).

  I will dial into tomorrow's telecon but thought I would at least give colleagues the opportunity to digest this information beforehand

  Regards, [redacted].

[redacted]