

Home Affairs



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH

From the Minister's Private Office

Michael Alexander Esq  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

19 September 1979

Dear Mr Alexander, <sup>NBPM</sup> MS

Thank you for confirming that the Prime Minister would have no objection to my Minister asking Lord Zuckerman to advise on our policy for dealing with tuberculous badgers. As I explained, Sir Ian Bancroft and Murdo MacLean similarly raised no objections on their own account, providing of course that you were content.

I attach a copy of the letter which was sent from our Permanent Secretary's Private Secretary to David Laughrin so that you have the full details of the Minister's proposal.

He is hoping to be able to make an announcement on Tuesday of next week.

Yours sincerely  
Frances Thompson

Miss F Thompson  
Private Secretary



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20 SEP 1979

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A P P O I N T M E N T S - I N C O N F I D E N C E

18 September 1979

The Ministry's duty of keeping the country's cattle free of bovine tuberculosis has been complicated in recent years by the presence of the disease in badgers. The problem has been virtually confined to some parts of South West England and we have been dealing with it, with increasing success, by gassing badger setts on or near the affected farms.

Until recently, we were able to conduct our operations without too much opposition, in part by keeping a panel of conservation, animal welfare and other representatives informed of our activities. But in the last couple of months there has been mounting criticism of our policy in the local press and on television and the Minister considers that some additional source of authoritative and independent advice is needed.

He therefore has it in mind to invite Lord Zuckerman to advise him on the appropriateness of the policy, in particular whether infected badgers are rightly being blamed for passing on tuberculosis to cattle and, if so, whether gassing is the most effective way of dealing with them. The review, which would take about 3 months, would be announced publicly and the eventual report would probably be published; but the Minister wishes to proceed on as personal and informal a basis as possible and to avoid the full committee of enquiry treatment. We would expect the cost to be confined to providing some secretarial help for Lord Zuckerman.



May we have the authority of the Head of Civil Service to proceed on these lines please?

Miss V A Heathorn

David Laughrin Esq  
PS/Sir Ian Bancroft GCB  
Civil Service Department  
Old Admiralty Building  
Whitehall  
LONDON  
SW1



Mr Walker's office informed. They  
will confirm in  
writing. h.g. And 1915



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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

The Minister of Agriculture's office have  
just rung to say that Mr Walker has it  
in mind to ask Lord Zuckerman to head  
an enquiry into the passing of badgers.

He would like to issue the invitation  
to-morrow evening. The Chief Whips office  
are content as is Sir Ian Bancroft.

Would you see any objection to Mr  
Walker proceeding as he proposes?

Go ahead

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And