

A comment on bovine TB

A farmer posted the following reply in the Farmers Guardian on 17Nov2011 in response to another comment which said that cattle, farmers and DEFRA's failure are the real root of the problem to bovine TB in Great Britain.

The following comment captures a farmer's utter despair so well. Small sections of text, which would only have been of value in the context of the forum, have been removed.

<START OF COMMENT>

We're due another TB test very soon; already had four tests in the past 12 months and we're pretty well tested to destruction round here. And the Dread stirs. How many will they take this time? They have killed over one-third of my fine, mainly home-bred, healthy cows in the last year, more in previous years. I want my cattle, not the massive compensation that Anonymous thinks I'm paid, (when the reality is that this year I will be £20,000 short on income, with almost no parallel reduction in my costs). Then I thought remember, it's your fault. What? Why? What have I done? Anonymous says so to the whole world. Anonymous says that cattle, farmers and DEFRA's failure... are the real root of the problem. He can't mean corn farmers, he must mean me. I am the real root of the bTB problem. But I've done all the required tests for years and years, so has every neighbour and beyond that I know, they just go on doing it and put up with the loss, hands tied behind their backs, slow motion execution. Or they give up. Some kill themselves. Good riddance, they're the real root of the problem. They leave desperate notes. And they leave families. Then I think: maybe Anonymous didn't actually mean farmers. Maybe he meant a very very few farmers. And I thought: I don't tell Anonymous that he's a thief and a criminal just because a minute proportion of our society are thieves and criminals. Anonymous must mean cattle farmers. Anonymous isn't stupid, or ignorant, or careless with what he blags over the internet. If he meant a very few he would say that.

And I thought: having got all the cattle in yet again, twice in one week, maybe raining on us all day, all the stress, will I have to hear the vet, one after another, another reactor I'm afraid. Will I be able to go on running them down the race. Will I finally succumb to the overwhelming urge to walk off and say test them your****self. When I phone Animal Health and say I don't think I can bring myself to load these fine cattle for such unnecessary premature slaughter. You're asking me to buy the bullets for my own execution. Will she laugh like last time and think I'm joking. Think I'm joking. Think I'm joking. Will she think I'm joking? Will I return happily home and tell Jane no worries, just another 15 going today, what's for tea? Will she say what are they doing about the badgers? Nothing. None have been even tested. All they do is talk and delay. They don't want to lose the vote of Anonymous. Anonymous knows such a lot. Anonymous is a badgerist, and badgerism is a faith thing.

Anonymous has just written that if we think badgers are the real problem why is it that the proposed slaughter of badgers will produce at best a 16% fall in bTB over 9 years. But Anonymous doesn't understand that this is DEFRA's guess, that the proposed cull will be on their incredible terms - not in winter so they can breed again, no more than 70% of the population and so on....Anonymous has written that DEFRA's guess means that badgers aren't the real problem. That's the logic. Incredibly. Anonymous doesn't understand that whether or not badgers are the real problem has absolutely nothing to do with DEFRA's culling proposals. Anonymous won't even understand what I'm saying. If he could understand, he could not possibly have written what he did.

And I say to the Ministry vet at the test it's not working is it? What isn't working? Your policy to control bTB. Well, we're clearing it from the cattle.

Yes, you're clearing it from the cattle. Like you have done since about 1930. I need to remember. It's my fault. Anonymous is right. It's my fault. The farmers are the real root of the problem. And I'm one of them. I hang my head. I will not let despair take over. I try and enjoy the autumn sunshine.

Hard luck story? No, that's exactly how it is, here on the coal face. For thousands of us here in the West and Wales. Exactly how it is.

In the intervening years, while we carry on waiting for a solution, like we waited for Nick Brown, Margaret Beckett, David Miliband, Hilary Benn, Jim Paice and others, what will Anonymous have to say to me when they have killed my last breeding cow? Silly cow farmer, you were the real root of the problem, ten of your mates disobeyed the rules.

<END OF COMMENT>