

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Lord Rooker,
Minister for Sustainable Food and Farming and Animal Health
DEFRA
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
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November 13th 2007

Dear Minister,

I very much welcome this month's announcement that DEFRA is to issue a tender for a bluetongue vaccine bank. I believe that vaccination can play a central role in helping to protect British livestock from this new disease.

Time is of the essence, of course. Given the demand from Germany, France and the Netherlands in particular, orders need to be placed urgently if the UK is to guarantee vaccine supplies for Spring 2008. Acting promptly will also help ensure that Britain benefits from the terms of Council Decision 90/424 with regard EU funding for vaccines and vaccination, assuming DEFRA submits a plan for compulsory vaccination and does not favour a voluntary scheme with the costs borne by individual farmers. I understand that the EU member states most severely affected by bluetongue are recommending compulsory vaccination and would press DEFRA to follow suit so as to prevent British farmers being placed at a financial disadvantage.

Please would you be kind enough to advise on DEFRA's position regarding compulsory or voluntary vaccination and on the time scale for developing a vaccine bank, including dates by which farmers can expect vaccines to be widely available.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.