

Making Tracks

From Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South East England

Summer 2002



Caroline Lucas MEP

"The purpose of these occasional newsletters is to explain the many activities within the EU that affect animal rights. Many people are unaware of this work and what they can do to ensure that it is directed towards improving animal welfare. I hope that this newsletter will help to fill that gap.

I have a long-standing personal commitment to improving the welfare of animals in the UK and abroad.

When I became an MEP, I saw it as an opportunity to make changes for the better. I have become Vice-President of the European Parliament's animal welfare committee. This is an informal, cross-party group of MEPs who meet regularly with organisations and experts in the field of animal welfare. We have achieved a considerable amount in influencing proposals from the European Commission and we could do more – with your support. Please read on to find out how you can help and what has been done already on your behalf."

Foot and mouth – a peace-time disaster

Given that the foot-and-mouth crisis was one of the greatest social and financial disasters ever to fall on peacetime Britain, it is hardly surprising that the calls for a full, public inquiry into the Government's handling of the crisis have not gone away, even more than 18 months after the first outbreak.

Up to 10 million animals were killed, thousands of livelihoods were ruined and it involved an operation which the Government itself said required more logistics than Britain's contribution to the Gulf War.

And yet, instead of a single, comprehensive inquiry, chaired by a genuinely independent figure, which many organisations have called for, Tony Blair and his advisors hit on the idea of dividing the main government review into three – Sir Don Curry's inquiry into the future of farming, Sir Brian Follet's scientific inquiry and Dr Iain Anderson's study of the administrative handling of the crisis.

The remit for these seems carefully

designed to ensure that many of the most fundamental questions are lost in the gaps between those three inquiries. Furthermore, none of them is the open or independent enquiry that was demanded. It was for those reasons that I enthusiastically supported the proposal that the European Parliament should conduct its own public and independent inquiry into the epidemic. In January of this year, MEPs from the Labour Party dutifully followed the briefing from Downing Street and voted against the proposal, but the majority of MEPs supported it and, in February, I was appointed one of its Vice-Presidents.

Key questions to address include:

- Why did the government hand over control of the epidemic to the computer team led by Professor Roy Anderson of Imperial College, an epidemiologist who had no expertise in the management or control of foot-and-mouth?
- Why, when the epidemic met all of the criteria for an emergency vaccination programme, did the government not begin vaccinating? Why did it ignore the advice of an array of international experts that this was the best course of action?



Caroline visits Ash Moor Pit, Devon, accompanied by a huge and unnecessary group of security personnel. Originally created for the burial of FMD animals, (in spite of environmental assessments showing significant geological dangers) but never used; it now costs £20,000 a week to patrol.

- Why were farmers so consistently misinformed over both the science and law on vaccination? Why were many falsely allowed to believe that vaccinated animals would have to be slaughtered or that they would lose out financially, when there is a specific EU provision to compensate them for such losses?
- Was the contiguous cull legal under EU law? If, as it appears, it was not, what are the consequences?



As a Green Party MEP, I am keen to ensure that the wider questions are also asked, particularly about the globalisation and intensification of agriculture. To what extent is this type of farming increasing the risk of disease?

We have an opportunity now, in the wake of foot-and-mouth, to create the conditions for a less intensive farming future, with local markets and supply chains.

European countries can and must reduce imports, ending the absurd 'food swap' (see box) that increases the risk of diseases spreading. If they don't, how long will it be before foot-and-mouth re-appears due to imports from a far-flung location?

Animal welfare and the 'great food swap'

The sheer absurdity of this 'food swap' is seen by the fact that Britain imported 240,000 tonnes of pork in the same year that we exported 195,000 tonnes.

We imported 125,000 tonnes of lamb while exporting 102,000 tonnes and, even more bizarrely, imported 61,400 tonnes of poultry meat from Holland while exporting 33,100 tonnes to Holland in the same year!

For more information and my report **Stopping the Great Food Swap (2000)** visit www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk or email caroline.lucas@greenmeps.org.uk •

Chemical testing – a White Paper from the European Commission

The European Commission is drawing up a programme to test chemicals manufactured before 1983, which could result in the deaths of thousands of animals.

The Green Party is committed to a complete ban on animal toxicity tests and to investment in non-animal alternatives. I have asked the Commissioner concerned, Margot Wallström, to reconsider the current proposals.

Lobby Commissioner Wallström at the European Commission, Rue de Loi 200 – B-1049, Bruxelles, Belgium. •

Banning animal tests on cosmetics – the seventh amendment to the Cosmetics Directive

In 1993, a ban on testing cosmetics on animals within the EU was incorporated into European legislation. It was due to be implemented in 1998. The marketing of cosmetics tested on animals was also to be banned.

The implementation date was delayed twice. Then, disgracefully, the EU backed away from its commitment to the marketing ban – meaning that cosmetics will simply be tested on animals outside of the EU and then imported to be sold within the EU. This is wholly unacceptable and the Green Group in the Parliament is fiercely opposing this.

The European Commission fears that the EU will fall foul of World Trade Organisation rules that insist on removing barriers to free trade – even if they have an ethical basis.

I have fought hard in the Parliament's Trade Committee to make the case that the Commission is wrong. I believe that there is a clear precedent for such a ban based on the US ban on the import of cat and dog fur.

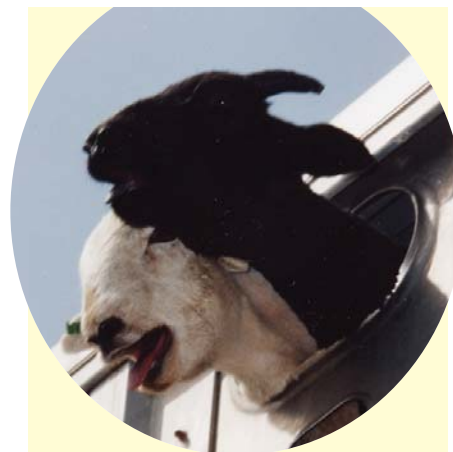
And, even if a case against the EU was brought to the WTO, I can think of no better test case to demonstrate that global trade rules should not take precedence over moral concerns.

I was therefore delighted when the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of a ban on both the testing and the marketing in the EU of cosmetics tested on animals.

It is now up to the European Council to deliver these changes. •

Alternative for chemical testing on animals

Green MEPs managed to convince fellow Parliamentarians that funding should be allocated for research into chemical testing that does not involve animals. I will be working hard to persuade the European Commission to provide this money as a matter of urgency. •



British sheep, left for 48 hours without water, in the blistering heat of the Italian port of Bari, 1999. Many died as a result.

Photo: Compassion in World Farming

TRANSPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS

To my great disappointment, live animal exports have resumed. I believe that the long-distance transportation of live animals should be stopped immediately.

In the meantime, I am lobbying the Commission for full enforcement of the transportation directive, which would at least improve the conditions under which animals are moved.

Later this year the Commission will be proposing new laws for the protection of animals during transport. I will use this opportunity to do all I can to end the movement of animals from the UK to the continent for slaughter and further fattening animals. •

CAT AND DOG FUR IMPORTS

Both the US and the Italian governments have banned imports of these animals' fur and there is now a European Parliament written declaration calling for an EU ban to the marketing and import of cat and dog fur.

The job is now to get the European Commission to agree. Commissioner David Byrne, at the European Commission, Rue de Loi 200 – B-1049, Bruxelles, Belgium, is the first person to persuade.

Please do add your voice to this vital campaign. •

KEEP CAMPAIGNING – MAKE A DIFFERENCE

For more information on my work, see my website www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk
Office of Caroline Lucas MEP, Suite 58, The Hop Exchange, 24 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TY.
Tel: 020 7407 6281 Fax: 020 7234 0183