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If you have any questions about NFU Scotland’s parliamentary activity or if you would like guidance on how to raise an issue with your MPs, please contact Sarah Anderson using the details above.

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Thursday 22 December Rural Priorities (Funding)

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how much it has committed to its rural priorities and how much it will commit for 2012 and 2013. (S4O-00523)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): The total funding awarded under the rural priorities scheme since 2008 is £480 million. More funding will be committed throughout 2012 for a range of projects. The 2011 spending review allocated £97.9 million in 2012-13 and £89.7 million in 2013-14 towards our rural priorities budget.

Claudia Beamish: Can the cabinet secretary give an update on projects such as diffuse pollution catchments, including those in my region at Eyemouth? Will the reduced commitments—as I understand it—under the rural priorities budget mean a scaling down of that work, which supports farmers and is important to maintaining good water quality?

Richard Lochhead: I will be happy to send Claudia Beamish more details about the specific issues in her region. I think that she refers to concerns about agri-environment funding, which she and other members have written to me about in recent weeks. I am confident that the demand for agri-environment funding will be met as we move forward. That is evidenced by the high approval rate in the September funding round, in which 82 per cent of applicants were successful. That is above the acceptance rate in some previous years, which I hope shows that demand is being met. Of course, I have already announced a full agri-environment round, which will take place in

2012.

Greylag Geese (Orkney)

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of the impact of greylag geese in Orkney and the effectiveness of the measures to limit the damage to agricultural land that the birds cause. (S4O-00524)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The impact of greylag geese in Orkney was examined in the report on the “Orkney Greylag Goose Feasibility Project”, which was commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage, and in the Scottish Government’s “2010 Review of Goose Management Policy in Scotland”, which was published in February 2011. The Orkney study concluded that, due to a number of factors, including the dispersed nature of wintering flocks, it would be premature to consider a standardised scheme across Orkney.

Following the 2010 review, Scottish Government and SNH officials are working with local farmers on goose-management issues to improve scaring techniques and to streamline the licensing procedure for the control of geese in the close season.

Liam McArthur: I thank the minister for his reply and for his letter of 11 December, which gave some helpful pointers. I would be grateful for clarification—if not now, then subsequently—on a couple of issues that he has not mentioned. He made no mention of extending the open season, which suggestion has been raised in the past. In a letter in July there was reference to consideration of sustainable harvesting of species. It would be helpful to know whether there will be sale of goose meat. The minister said in the letter of 11 December that the national goose management review group is considering a range of options for managing goose populations. More detail on that would be helpful for my constituents.

Stewart Stevenson: I am glad that Liam McArthur has had that letter, which is an extensive one.

On extending the open season, we would prefer in the first instance to rely on licenses to allow farmers to scare geese off by shooting some of them during the close season. That approach is available now and it is relatively straightforward. I acknowledge that there are particular and special problems in Orkney that do not exist on the same scale elsewhere because of the dispersed nature of the goose population and the fact that some 10,000 geese are now resident there all the year round. However, we certainly want to continue to work with local farmers and others to ensure that we have adequate numbers of licenses and trained people to continue shooting during what is currently the close season.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Scaring techniques in an offshore archipelago like Orkney tend to result only in moving geese from one island to another. The island of Islay has a very good scheme to manage geese. Would the minister commit to further studies on the impact of the greylag geese in Orkney with a view to introducing an appropriate management scheme in the future?

Stewart Stevenson: Jamie McGrigor makes a perfectly reasonable point about the nature of the Orkney islands. In that respect, the techniques that are applied in Islay will not necessarily transfer readily to Orkney. The key will be the simplification measures that we are undertaking to ensure that it is easier to shoot geese, as appropriate. The programme of shooting could be co-ordinated so that movement of geese such as the member referred to is not simply a consequence with no real benefit.

Sheep (Electronic Identification)

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it advises livestock producers about their on-farm obligations regarding the electronic identification of sheep. (S4O-00528)

Richard Lochhead: Electronic identification of sheep was introduced to enhance traceability and enable efficient and effective disease control. Since its introduction in January 2010, we have worked very closely with all stakeholder groups to keep Scottish sheep farmers and crofters informed of their regulatory requirements.

Angus MacDonald: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the call from NFU Scotland for reform of the regulations regarding sheep EID. Has he given any thought to the call for an approach that would accept a single flock tag from nine months, and which would require an upgrade only to double-tag EID when an animal leaves a farm? Alternatively, an opportunity exists to introduce to the proposed cattle EID regulations provisions that could be used

to modify current sheep EID standards.

Richard Lochhead: This is an issue which I accept continues to cause a lot of anxiety for sheep farmers. The concession that the members suggests, which would be good for Scotland is, of course, something that we have attempted unsuccessfully to win over the past few years, although we have won other concessions that have made things easier. We met the industry on 7 December to agree a common agenda on some of the outstanding issues with the sheep EID regulations, so that we can go back to Europe and try to win more concessions.

15 December 2011 **Wind Farms (Guidance on Siting)**

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will provide strategic guidance on the siting of wind farms. (S4O-00501)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): Paragraphs 187 to 191 of the “Scottish Planning Policy” document set out the strategic approach to dealing with wind farms, including siting. The document is available on the Scottish Government’s website.

Alex Johnstone: I thank the minister for his answer, but in practical terms we are experiencing a periodic free-for-all in applications. Local authorities that address their responsibilities in this respect are being immediately inundated with applications, as a result of which hotspots exist and continue to form around the country. Will the Government accept its responsibility for this ill-advised energy policy and shoulder its responsibility to provide real and usable strategic guidance on the siting of wind turbines?

Fergus Ewing: Guidance was put in place in 2002, 2006 and 2009, and—as I said in the debate a couple of weeks ago at which Alex Johnstone was present—further guidance on cumulative impact will be issued shortly by Scottish Natural Heritage.

These are serious matters, so it does not help to conduct the debate in such stentorian and hyperbolic tones. We need a little more light and a little less heat.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The minister was present at the members’ business debate on wind farms two weeks ago. He will have noticed the significant level of public and cross-party interest in the issue. Will he commit to a debate on this important issue in Government time early in the new year?

Fergus Ewing: I am aware of the debate the other week, which Neil Findlay led. I thought that members from all parties made useful contributions, which we are studying. I expect that we will debate matters further in the Parliament as time goes on.

However, the first step should be to consider the guidance to which I referred, following its publication, and recent announcements of other measures, such as Scottish and Southern Energy’s announcement that it will increase the amount of community benefit that it pays to £5,000 per megawatt. This is a dynamic area of policy. I assure the member that we will keep Parliament fully informed and involved at all times. I welcome his question on the matter.

8 December 2011 **Feed-in Tariffs (Solar Panels)**

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what response it has received from the United Kingdom Government to its representations on reductions to feed-in tariffs from solar panels. (S4O-00425)

Fergus Ewing: I wrote to Chris Huhne, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, on 24 October and 3 November to express my dismay at the proposals and to ask what action the UK Government is planning to take to address the impact on businesses, householders and social housing projects.

I received responses from energy minister Greg Barker on 7 November and from Chris Huhne on 21 November, which restated their position that: “failing to act now would result in the entire FITs budget for the four-year spending review period being committed in the next few months”.

I have not yet had a response to my questions on the action that the UK Government will take to help those badly affected by the proposals. UK ministers cannot be unaware of the consequences that the proposals are having right now, but their only answer is to refer people to the consultation—which closes after the deadline of 12 December.

Roderick Campbell: Does the minister agree that the proposals to cut the feed-in tariff by more than 50 per cent in one year are disappointing when contrasted with the Scottish Government’s ambitious programme for renewable

energy production? Will he continue to press the UK Government for a reversal of the decision?

Fergus Ewing: I agree that the UK Government's proposals are disappointing. Particular difficulty has been caused by the imposition of the 12 December deadline. I know that from representations that I have received from businesses throughout the country, which indicate that the substantial investment that they have made may prove to be wasted because it is simply not possible to deal with the installations by 12 December. I hope that the UK Government will listen to this interchange and seriously consider taking action to deal with that unfairness.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Is there any action that the Scottish Government can take to assist local authorities and housing associations in installing solar panels in their houses, thus saving money for tenants and giving small businesses, such as Skyline Installations in my constituency, opportunities to grow and diversify?

Fergus Ewing: Elaine Smith properly indicates an area where the Government is already active and where there is certainly scope for improvement. Plainly, we would wish bodies in the public arena to avail themselves of every opportunity to fit, and retrofit where necessary, green energy equipment. All of us, across the chamber, are united on that front, and I look forward to working with Elaine Smith and other colleagues to achieve that objective.

Jamie McGrigor: Is the minister aware that, despite the cuts in feed-in tariffs, installation costs have fallen by around 30 per cent from previous levels? Combined with electricity price rises, that should mean that solar panels will still be viable in a lot of cases.

Fergus Ewing: Jamie McGrigor makes a reasonable point. The capital cost of the equipment has been reducing, and all the parties have recognised that that requires some adjustment to the FIT. However, I say to him and his colleagues in the governing parties in the London Parliament that the imposition of the deadline of 12 December came as a bolt from the blue. To judge from my postbag, it has caused real concern, possible redundancies and wasted investment. That is why, in the very near future, I will meet and bring together a large number of the businesses that have been affected to learn directly of their experiences and to determine what more we can do to urge our colleagues in Westminster to think again.

24 November 2011 Agri-environment Schemes

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it assessed the future demand for agri-environment schemes when developing the current draft budget and spending review. (S4O-00392)

Stewart Stevenson: We took a range of factors into account, such as demand under the current and previous programmes and the views of key stakeholders. A key part of the process was to ensure that funding is available to deliver key benefits to Scotland's environment, such as biodiversity.

Funding continues to be available and results from the two previous agri-environment rounds show a consistent level of approvals. We have already announced that a full agri-environment funding round will take place in 2012.

Elaine Murray: Does the Government have contingency plans if there is a surge in applications towards the end of the round? The minister may remember that that happened with the rural stewardship scheme as it came to an end. Can he reassure members that demand will not be managed down by changing criteria or cancelling schemes?

Stewart Stevenson: We very much value the contribution that the schemes have made to date. For example, we have invested £33 million in hedgerows since 2008 and we have seen a significant improvement in biodiversity from that expenditure. We wish to ensure that in managing the issues that the member referred to, such as a surge in applications, we continue to deliver important benefits for biodiversity.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Wednesday 21 December 2011 Rural Broadband

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will ensure that homes and businesses in rural areas receive access to broadband at the same time as those in urban areas.

Alex Neil: As set out in our Digital Strategy, the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring the availability of next generation broadband for all by 2020, with significant progress by 2015 – with particular focus on ensuring that rural households and businesses are not left behind.

We are clear that the majority of next generation broadband investment should be market-led, and that public sector support should only be targeted in areas of market failure. We recognise that the majority of private sector investment is likely to be in urban areas where consumer demand is sufficient to make commercial investment viable.

Our approach to delivery in rural areas will be set out in our national broadband action plan which will be published in January 2012, to be followed in March with a detailed delivery plan.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what the maximum grant available to housing associations is for the building of new homes in remote and rural areas.

Keith Brown: The introduction of the Innovation and Investment Fund (IIF) this year, replaced the previous Affordable Housing Investment Programme budget. Under the IIF, the benchmark subsidy figure which applies to applications from housing associations is £40,000 per unit. The Scottish Government will retain flexibility to consider higher subsidy levels e.g. in remote rural areas or where projects require additional features to meet particular needs.

Wednesday 14 December **Species-rich grassland**

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many farmers have undertaken an environmental impact assessment before ploughing species-rich grassland and how many possible breaches have been investigated, in each of the last three years.

Stewart Stevenson: Details of Environmental Impact Assessments under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 are available on the Scottish Government's website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Environment/16808/7217>.

Within the last three years, one proposal for intensification works on unimproved grassland has been deemed a "relevant project" likely to have a significant effect on the environment under the provisions of the above regulations, and could not be carried out without the consent of Scottish Ministers. For such projects to proceed, Environmental Statements are required in order to assess environmental impact, and to determine if consent can be given. An Environmental Statement for this proposal was received in 2009 by the Scottish Government and, following careful consideration, consent was refused.

No breaches in relation to unconsented works on species-rich grassland have been investigated by the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate within the last three years.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what its position is on the statement in Scottish Agricultural College technical note TN629 that 40% of species-rich grassland was lost in the period 1983 to 2005 and what monitoring is being undertaken by it or its agencies to avoid further loss of this habitat.

Stewart Stevenson: The Scottish Government is aware of the 40% estimate quoted in the technical note, however as there is no reference cited for the figure its basis is unclear. We acknowledge that changes in land management in recent decades have resulted in a decrease in species rich grasslands throughout the UK.

Scottish Natural Heritage monitors the area of priority habitats in Scotland (as specified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan). It advises that the five lowland grassland priority habitats which most closely approximate the description of species rich grassland declined by an estimated 24% between 1983 and 2005.

The Scottish Government takes the loss of this important habitat very seriously. To address this, the Species Rich Grassland package has been developed in the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). The package provides funding to farmers to conserve, restore and create species rich grassland. To date, committed spend on the Species Rich Grassland package since 2007 totals £11.1 million.

Scottish Natural Heritage is carrying out a project to re-sample previously recorded species rich grassland sites and will report in 2012 on changes in their extent. The Scottish Government is also monitoring the biodiversity outcomes from the agri-environment schemes within the SRDP through a three year programme which began in July of this year. It will assess a sample of 20 agri-environment options which includes seven grassland options.

Friday 9 December **Broadband**

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of the impact on (a) the economy, (b) the rural economy and (c) its broadband strategy of the delay to the auction of the spectrum for mobile services in the (i) 800 and (ii) 2,600 MHz band.

Alex Neil: As set out in *Scotland's Digital Future: A Strategy for Scotland*, the Scottish Government has made it clear it expects all of Scotland, including rural Scotland, to benefit from the roll out of 4G mobile services. The delay to the auction is therefore concerning, particularly as the roll out of 4G mobile services could play a significant role in improving broadband coverage across Scotland.

As the specific details of the auction design are not yet known, it is therefore difficult to carry out an assessment of the impact of the delay on the (i) economy, (ii) rural economy or the (iii) broadband strategy. As far as we are aware, no detailed assessment has been made at a UK or Scottish level on the impact of the delay. However, Ofcom has indicated that it does not expect the postponement of the auction to significantly delay the availability of new services to customers.

Monday 5 December **Sheep EID**

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S4W-03565 by Richard Lochhead on 21 November 2011, whether it will clarify precisely what is meant by sheep keepers being given some additional flexibility.

Richard Lochhead: Farmers moving full double EID tagged or single "Slaughter" tagged sheep off their holding to a Critical Control Point can rely on the CCP to read and upload to the ScotEID database all individual IDs of the animals moved without fear of penalties in the event of missed reads.

Farmers moving single slaughter tagged animals on to their holding need only record the flock mark and number of animals per flock mark – there is no need to record individual IDs.

Farmers who choose to rely on ScotEID to record individual IDs of double EID tagged sheep moved on to their holding are advised to check ScotEID regularly but provided that read rates are close to the average of 95% or that no more than one or two animals have been misread then no remedial action should be required.

Measures have also been put in place by which farmers may contact ScotEID for information on read rates and advice on rectifying errors. These measures have been introduced in order to help farmers reduce the likelihood of penalties applying following an inspection. We have worked with NFUS to communicate this message and to raise awareness of the most common errors found at inspection.

Definition of permanent grassland

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive what the proposed definition of permanent grassland is under the common agricultural policy reform proposals and whether it includes heather.

Richard Lochhead: The draft regulation currently gives the following definition; "permanent grassland means land used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally (self-seeded) or through cultivation (sown) and that has not been included in the crop rotation of the holding for five years or longer; it may include other species suitable for grazing provided that the grasses and other herbaceous forage remain predominant".

Heather is not an herbaceous plant. However, the draft regulation as it currently stands allows the inclusion of other species suitable for grazing provided grasses and other herbaceous forage remain predominant.

The draft regulation is currently being discussed at working group stage in Europe and is subject to change.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the (a) UK Government and (b) European Commission regarding the common agricultural policy proposal on the definition of permanent grassland.

Richard Lochhead: The definition of permanent grassland has been discussed with UK and other Devolved Administrations on a number of occasions. The issue has also been raised with European Commission officials and our views have been fed in to the Commission's Working Groups that are discussing the draft regulations.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Northern Ireland Executive regarding its proposal that heather should be subject to a particular height measurement in terms of its eligibility for inclusion in permanent grassland under the common agricultural policy reform proposals.

Richard Lochhead: We have discussed the eligibility of heather with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland (DARDNI) on several occasions as part of wider UK/Devolved Administration discussions. We are aware that in the guidance they provide to farmers DARDNI suggest that as a general rule heather should not exceed 50cm in height.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive what the actual outturn percentage change was in Less Favoured Area Support scheme (LFASS) payments for 2011-12 compared with the projected 38% rise previously announced by the Scottish Government.

Richard Lochhead: We have delivered our commitment to increase LFASS payment rates for the Fragile and Very Fragile areas by 38%, between the 2008 and 2010 scheme years. Actual payments to producers under the scheme can vary so there is not a direct read-across to individual payments. Producers in Fragile and Very Fragile areas will all have benefitted from this increase.

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

CAP

On Wednesday 30 November, 2011, the Scottish Parliament's RACCE committee took evidence on CAP from Scottish MEPs George Lyon and Alyn Smith. To read the full report from the session, please follow this link: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6594&mode=pdf>

On Wednesday 23 November, 2022 the RACCE committee took evidence from NFUS Chief Executive, Scott Walker on CAP. To read the full report of the session, please follow this link: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6574&mode=pdf>

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT BRIEFING PAPER ON CAP

The Scottish Parliament's research bureau, SPICe published an information note on the CAP proposals on 18 November 2011. To read the paper, please follow this link: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/44270.aspx>

UK PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ENVIRONMENT FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On 14 December the Committee took evidence on 'greening' the CAP. To read a full transcript of the session, please follow this link: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvfru/uc1654-iii/uc165401.htm>

19 Dec 2011 Welfare of laying hens directive

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects the EU Egg Marketing regulations to be amended.

Mr Paice: We will continue to press in Europe to have the relevant EU legislation amended to enable a good enforcement strategy that helps prevent the marketing of eggs when they come from hens reared in conventional cages.

In the meantime we have taken steps to establish as much compliance as is possible with the conventional cage ban. A number of retailers, egg processors, food manufacturers and the food service industry are working to ensure that they have stringent traceability tests in place so that they can guarantee they are not sourcing conventional eggs from caged hens from either the UK or other member states. The industry has risen to the challenge and come out in support of producers who have stopped using conventional cages, reducing the risk of conventional cage eggs and egg products being marketed in the UK. My written statement to the House of 6 December 2011, columns 15-19WS, includes a list of companies able to make this pledge and we will keep this list up to date.

15 December **EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mrs Caroline Spelman): The next Agriculture and Fisheries Council is on Thursday 15 and Friday 16 December, in Brussels. I shall represent the UK on agriculture matters on Thursday and the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) will be representing the United Kingdom on the fisheries items throughout the Council. Richard Lochhead MSP, Michelle O'Neill MLA and Alun Davies AM will also attend.

- CAP reform rural development proposal—A public debate focusing on the rural development proposal.
- GM approvals—Council vote on approvals for use as food and feed of four GM varieties (three maize and one cotton).
- Agricultural products promotions policy—Consideration of Council conclusions commenting on the green paper on promotion measures.
- Protection of animals during transport—Commission report on implementation of the animal transport rules.
- Codex Alimentarius—A presidency report back on the recent meeting of this UN body for international food standards.
- Hungarian item on a technical aspect of the authorisation of GM products.

Finally, there is a ministerial lunch on Thursday 15 December to discuss certain aspects of rural development, including promoting innovation and risk management measures.

Wednesday 14 December **Dairy Farming: Animal Welfare**

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether she has received interim findings of the research which her Department commissioned the Scottish Agricultural College to undertake on the management and welfare of continuously housed dairy cows; when she plans to publish the results of that research; whether the Government plans to issue a response to the research after it is published; and if she will make a statement. [86185]

Mr Paice: The submission of the final report, which will include details of the critical phase of the analysis, has been delayed as a result of difficulties in obtaining all the necessary data on continuously housed dairy farming in the UK. However, we are now expecting to receive a substantive update from the researchers at the end of the year. The Department intends to publicise the results along with any necessary commentary in due course. I would be happy to place a copy of these in the Library of the House as soon as they are available.

Welfare of Laying Hens Directive

On Tuesday 13 December MPs debated the Welfare of Laying Hens Directive. To read a transcript of the debate, please follow this link:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm111213/halltext/111213h0001.htm#1112136800002>

Tuesday 13 December **Welfare of laying hens directive**

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish any legal advice she received on the potential for the Government to implement a unilateral ban on the import of eggs from EU member states that have not complied with Directive 1999/74/EC. [86578]

Mr Paice: The Government's legal advice is protected by legal professional privilege. The Government's position is not ordinarily to waive the legal privilege attaching to any legal advice received.

Monday 12 December **Antimicrobial resistance**

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the risk to human and animal health of the use of antibiotics on farm animals as a preventative measure. [84664]

Mr Paice: All veterinary medicinal products must satisfy extensive safety criteria, which include safety to the animal being treated, safety to humans and safety to the environment before being granted a marketing

authorisation. Efficacy and quality criteria must also be satisfied. There is also a specific requirement for manufacturers to supply data to address the area of the development of resistance new antibiotic products prior to authorisation.

Veterinary medicinal products containing antibiotics are available only on veterinary prescription. Where products have been authorised for use in food producing animals, the greater majority are authorised for the treatment of disease. This authorisation includes the treatment of groups of animals when not all individual animals have developed the symptoms of the disease. A minority of veterinary medicinal product containing antibiotics are authorised for the prevention of disease in farmed animals and these include those used to prevent mastitis in dairy cattle at drying-off.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the number of animals subjected to mulesing in England in the latest period for which figures are available; and what assessment she has made of the effect of this practice on the welfare of the animal. [84665]

Mr Paice: Mulesing is not a permitted procedure in the UK. There have been no reported illegal mutilations of animals in this way in the UK, therefore no assessment of this practice has been made on the welfare of the UK-reared animal.

Monday 6 December **Welfare of Laying Hens**

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr James Paice): I know many members of the House have been following progress on the implementation of the EU-wide ban on the keeping of hens in conventional cages. I, therefore, want to take this opportunity to update the House and explain how the ban will be enforced by DEFRA and the devolved Administrations.

Council Directive 1999/74/EC, which lays down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens, bans the keeping of hens in conventional (“battery”) cages from 1 January 2012. This represents one of the most significant welfare advances across the EU and DEFRA, along with the devolved Administrations, has been working hard to see it effectively implemented across the European Union.

The Government acknowledge the sterling job that the UK egg industry has done in preparing for the ban and the very big investment made in converting to other production systems, demonstrating its commitment to animal welfare, which is also a serious consideration for many consumers when purchasing food. The vast majority of UK producers will be compliant by 1 January 2012.

It is a different story across Europe. 13 of the 27 member states have said that they will not be ready. There could be about 50 million hens that will still be in conventional cages across the EU in unacceptable conditions on 1 January 2012.

We want to protect our producers who have invested some £400 million in converting out of conventional cages, equivalent to spending £25 per hen housed. To this end, I have met with the Commission a number of times over the last year in an attempt to find a solution. A reliance on infraction proceedings against non-compliant member states will not be enough to deal with the negative impact that non-compliance would cause and that additional enforcement measures would need to be put in place to prevent market disturbance. In September, the Secretary of State wrote jointly with nine other concerned member states to the European Commission urging them to act quickly. At the October Agriculture Council, the Commission indicated that despite their efforts an intra-Community trade ban was not legally possible.

The Commission then turned to looking for a robust enforcement approach that avoids large numbers of producers having to close down their operations and the destruction of millions of hens and non-compliant eggs, while at the same time protecting all those producers who have complied with the ban and implemented a flagship animal welfare issue. While I never wished to see the 2012 deadline delayed, I was willing to explore the idea of a practical solution which would give some protection to UK and other compliant producers, by ensuring eggs from illegal cages did not leave the country of origin.

There was a meeting at official level on 29 November, where the Commission said that the early stages of pre-infraction procedures had already begun with non-compliant member states. The idea of a gentleman’s agreement will not be progressed, but the Commission has asked for action plans from all non-compliant member states, many of whom supported keeping non-compliant eggs within national borders. The Commission’s Food and Veterinary Office missions will be targeted at the beginning of 2012 at non-compliant member states and all member states have been asked to submit lists of compliant and non-compliant producers.

We have decided that the UK enforcement strategy to deal with non-compliance with the conventional cage ban will be robust.

The Government have thoroughly investigated the possibility of taking unilateral action and bringing in a UK ban on all imports of egg and egg products which have been produced in conventional cages in other member states.

However, given the very significant legal and financial implications of introducing such a ban, coupled with practical difficulties in enforcing it, it is not a realistic option.

Instead, DEFRA and the devolved Administrations will be adopting the most robust enforcement approach available to us within the legal constraints that exist. Risk-based surveillance to ensure imported shell eggs from other member states have been produced in compliance with the cage ban will be in place from 1 January. The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) is the body responsible for enforcing the conventional cage ban in Great Britain. Its knowledge of the industry and those importing eggs, coupled with an understanding of a member state's level of compliance will define the level of surveillance.

AHVLA surveillance on imports of shell eggs will use ultraviolet light analysis to identify batches of caged eggs that are not from an enriched cage environment. This technique has successfully been used to date to identify caged eggs within batches described as being produced in alternative systems, for example, free-range. It has not up until now been used to specifically identify different types of caged egg production, but we have had the technique independently validated and it can be done. This technique will be used as a marker to prompt further action. Once suspected non-compliant shell eggs are identified, AHVLA will contact the Competent Authority in the originating member state and ask for confirmation of the system of production.

If they are found to be from an illegal system, they will be prevented from being marketed as class A eggs and would be sent for processing (i.e. be treated as class B eggs)—if indeed any UK processors would accept them. If the eggs were found to be from a compliant system, the eggs would be released.

We believe this scrutiny will mean importers will make greater efforts to ensure the source and integrity of the eggs they import, given the economic disadvantage that would follow if they were importing illegally produced eggs. We have no wish to hinder legal trade or disadvantage compliant producers wherever they are in Europe and we are quite happy to use member states' own lists of compliant producers, which AHVLA can check against and which will mean that these consignments are less likely to be held up.

However, the import of processed egg, principally in liquid or powdered form, is less easy to trace as the supply chain is less transparent and more challenging to audit. Because of a loophole in the egg marketing regulations, we cannot prohibit the marketing of any eggs produced in conventional cages from 1 January 2012 which are sent to processing (whether sent as ungraded or class B), nor can we prohibit the use of any products made from such eggs. We will continue to press in Europe to get this loophole closed, but until then we are taking steps to establish as much compliance as is possible with the conventional cage ban for egg products by working closely with the food industry.

An essential part of the UK's enforcement strategy is to ensure that retailers, egg processors, food manufacturers and the food service industry have stringent traceability tests in place to ensure that they are not using non-compliant eggs from either the UK or from other member states. Once again, our industry has risen to that challenge.

Retailers, food manufacturers, food service companies and processors have come out publicly in support of UK egg producers. The British Retail Consortium has guaranteed that conventional caged eggs will not be bought by the major retailers or used as ingredients in their own brand products. They have put in place stringent traceability tests to ensure that they will not be buying conventional caged eggs. Retailers that have made this guarantee are Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Asda, J Sainsbury, Co-operative Group, Tesco, Waitrose, Iceland Foods, Greggs, Starbucks and McDonald's. Many food manufacturers and food service companies have also given a similar guarantee for eggs or egg products. They include: Premier Foods plc, Marlow Foods Ltd, United Biscuits, Ferrero UK, Apetito, Allied Mills, Allied Bakeries, Burton's Biscuit Company, Speedibake, Dairy Crest, The Silver Spoon Company, Westmill Foods, Compass, Baxter Storey, and Sodexo. The following egg processors have also signed up to not sourcing conventional caged eggs from 1 January 2012: Manton's, Noble Foods, Framptons, Fridays, Oaklands Farm Eggs, Lowrie Foods, and the UK Egg Centre. We are in discussion with others who we hope to be able to add to this list. The UK is 82% self-sufficient in egg and egg products, with the remaining 18% coming from other member states. Of the 18% of egg and egg products being imported, approximately 50% will be imported as shell egg and 50% imported as egg product (liquid or powder). The fact that we have managed to get the majority of UK processors on board, reduces the likelihood of non-compliant egg products being imported and demonstrates that full traceability is possible and should not be used as a justification by others to say that it is not.

Ultimately, it will be for the Competent Authority in each member state to take responsibility at source for ensuring that their producers no longer keep hens in conventional cages post 1 January 2012. If a retailer purchased eggs from a conventional cage that are marked incorrectly as class A, without exercising appropriate due diligence, they would be committing a marketing offence. The caterer, processor or product manufacturer might also be guilty of aiding and abetting such an offence if they knowingly purchased eggs purporting to be class A which derive from illegal cages.

The Government will also do their bit to protect compliant producers. We will be making necessary changes to the Government Buying Standards mandatory criteria to ensure that eggs produced in conventional cages, are not used in any form whether this is fresh, powdered or liquid.

Given our commitment to support compliant producers, we will also be taking tough action against any UK producers found to have laying hens in conventional cages after 1 January 2012. The AHVLA have visited the vast majority of known cage producers to remind them of the need to comply with the conventional cage ban when it comes into force at the end of the year and at the same time find out producers' intentions, as to whether they will cease production or convert to alternative systems. Similar action has also been taken by Scottish Government officials and officials in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland. This has helped to build a picture of where remaining non-compliance may be found and thus where risk based inspections should be targeted in the UK from 1 January 2012. All producers targeted by the intelligence led risk analysis will be visited at the beginning of next year. If contraventions are found at the time of the visit, they will be dealt with using provisions within the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, which implements Council Directive 99/74/EC, and the egg marketing regulations. A compliance notice will be issued immediately to ensure that conventional caged eggs do not go into the class A market, preventing the producer from benefiting from the production of illegally produced eggs and prosecution will be considered. Similar action will be taken as appropriate in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We will be monitoring the situation carefully in the new year and will not hesitate to raise matters in Europe if any issues arise. I, together with my ministerial colleagues in the devolved Administrations, intend to continue urging the Commission to learn lessons from this experience with the conventional cage ban to avoid the same kind of problems occurring next year, leading up to the EU ban on the use of sow stalls on 1 January 2013.

Monday 6 December **Sky Lanterns**

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made on regulating the use of Chinese lanterns in order to protect livestock on farms; and if she will make a statement. [82204]

Mr Paice: We share farmers' concern about the potential risks of sky lanterns (also known as Chinese lanterns). We are continuing to work with other Departments and the agricultural industry to address them.

Our current approach is to raise public awareness of the potential dangers posed by sky lanterns (and to focus on voluntary action with the aim of influencing consumer behaviour). I wrote to the British Hospitality Association in the summer to advise its membership of hotels, restaurants and other venues of the problems they cause, principally the harm to livestock and litter and to ask that they discourage customers from using these lanterns. DEFRA also issued a press release earlier this month for bonfire night to warn people of the harm sky lanterns can cause.

We are also pursuing other voluntary options and working closely with the National Farmers Union and the Women's Farming Union as they gather the evidence necessary to justify any potential future ban. These two organisations are doing a sterling job in raising awareness of the risks posed by sky lanterns and urging support for local farmers.

In parallel, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills is raising the issue with the Commission and exploring the views of other member states.

Monday 6 December **Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill**

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether he plans to increase the power of suppliers in relation to large retailers under the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill. [83119]

Mr Davey: By enforcing and overseeing the Groceries Code, the Groceries Code Adjudicator will strengthen the position of suppliers in relation to large retailers.

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) whether the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill will have provision to protect the anonymity of suppliers when requesting an investigation be launched; [83120]

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that the criteria for launching an investigation under the provisions of the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill do not adversely affect the ability of a supplier to request an investigation anonymously. [83121]

Mr Davey: Protecting the confidentiality of suppliers who raise a complaint will be both a power and a duty of the Adjudicator.

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether the Groceries Code Adjudicator will be given the ability to launch an investigation if he has reasonable grounds to suspect a breach of the Groceries Code regardless of where the evidence has originated. [83122]

Mr Davey: The Groceries Code Adjudicator will be able to launch an investigation based on information that is publicly available, or information provided by a supplier. The Government have agreed to consider the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee’s proposals that information provided by trade bodies and industry whistleblowers should also be considered.

Tuesday 29 November 2011 Cattle: Exports

Harriett Baldwin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many cattle have been approved for export in each month in the last three years. [83567]

Mr Paice: The numbers of live cattle approved for export in each month over the last three years (2008-10) are as follows:

Number	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008	866	1,655	1,142	1,510	753	1,215	1,430	127	292	201	140	701
2009	665	0	96	96	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	0	14	0

Notes: 1. These figures include both pure bred and non-pure bred breeding animals. 2. Data prepared by Trade Statistics, Economics and Statistics Programme, DEFRA. Source: HM Revenue and Customs.

Monday 28 November 2011 Common Agricultural Policy

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average sum was received by farmers (a) in each constituent part of the UK and (b) at the smallest geographical level for which figures are available directly and indirectly from the common agricultural policy in the latest year for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [82386]

Mr Paice: The average sum received by beneficiaries of the CAP for the financial year 2010 within each of the constituent parts of the UK, the only geographical level for which such data are readily available, is as follows:

Paying agency	Average sum per beneficiary (€)
RPA	19,176
SGRPID (Scotland)	35,288
WAG (Wales)	22,140
DARD (Northern Ireland)	9,783

Note: 1. The sums above refer to all funding under CAP provisions, including UK co-financing where appropriate. 2. The financial year in question ran from 16 October 2009 to 15 October 2010.

Thursday 24 November Common Agricultural Policy

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): What recent steps she [The Secretary of State for Environment] has taken on reform of the common agricultural policy. [82269]

Caroline Spelman: The Government have commenced negotiations on the CAP reform proposals, which the Commission published on 12 October and which, for the first time, require the co-decision of the European Parliament. I recently met Agriculture Commissioner Ciolos, together with the Agriculture Ministers for the devolved Administrations, to ensure that all parts of the United Kingdom are taken into account.

Mr Bone: Our net contribution to the European Union in the last five years of the Labour Government was £19 billion, and in the next five years of this coalition Government it will be £41 billion—an increase of 116%, because Tony Blair gave away Mrs Thatcher’s EU rebate. At the time, he said that our net contribution would not increase because the European Union had promised massive reform of the CAP. Who was lying, Tony Blair or the European Union?

Mrs Spelman: That is precisely why the UK Government have expressed their disappointment that the proposed CAP reforms lack ambition. Although the commissioner correctly identifies food security and climate change as the two key challenges that agriculture faces, I regret that the proposals do not really address the great challenge. Therefore, we will seek to improve them to get the best possible outcome for taxpayers, consumers and farmers alike.

Mr Denis MacShane (Rotherham) (Lab): The Secretary of State will recall that that great European, Socrates, said that a politician who does not know the price of a bushel of wheat should not be in the job. If we got rid of the CAP, we would have to have a BAP—a British agricultural policy. Knowing our farming community—a landowning community—and its control of top Tories, I suggest that the BAP would be far more expensive than the CAP.

Mrs Spelman: I think we are speculating wildly about the future of Europe. My job is to concentrate on getting an improvement in the reforms. It is important to appreciate that the underlying objective of the CAP is to provide good-quality food at a reasonable price. My Department is committed in its business plan priorities to producing more food sustainably, precisely to achieve that objective.

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that a primary objective must be a move from market-distorting production supports to supporting public goods, such as the environment and amenity. How much progress does she believe the CAP reforms are making in that direction? How do we ensure that that general direction of progress can be accelerated?

Mrs Spelman: That is a helpful question, as it enables me to share with the House the fact that we are on a journey with these proposals. We welcome the fact that the Commission wants to “green” the CAP. Taxpayers have every right to expect other public goods for the subsidy they provide. We feel that the “greening” proposals also lack ambition, and we want proper recognition of the fact that UK farmers go a lot further than those in a lot of other member states in providing stewardship schemes that make a real difference and provide environmental benefits that address problems such as the demise of species.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): There is much talk of returning powers from Brussels to this Parliament and the British Government. Would the CAP not be a good policy to bring back to Britain? Could we not subsidise British farmers, even at the current levels, and save billions of pounds from our budget every year?

Mrs Spelman: The nature of the supplementary questions is ranging much wider than the remit of my Department. As I have said, my job at each one of these Council meetings is to get the best possible deal for consumers, taxpayers and farmers in the hon. Gentleman’s constituency. That is my duty.

Thursday 24 November 2011 Welfare of laying hens directive

Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): What discussions she has had with (a) her EU counterparts and (b) ministerial colleagues on the implementation of the welfare of laying hens directive. [82277]

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr James Paice): Discussions at EU level are ongoing, and the UK is fully engaged with the Commission, other member states and the devolved Administrations on finding a practical enforcement solution. We need to protect producers across the EU who will have complied with the ban from unfair competition from those who fail to comply.

Pauline Latham: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that the concerns of the United Kingdom are being heard because of early representations by this Government? Will he commit to doing the same for our pig farmers, who risk being disadvantaged in the same way by new animal welfare regulations due in 2013?

Mr Paice: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that it is over a year since we first told the Commission that it was quite obvious that a number of countries would not be able to comply in time. She is absolutely correct that this is a precursor to an even bigger welfare issue: the ban on sow stalls, which comes in on 1 January 2013. If we do not get it right this time, it does not bode very well for 2013.

Sarah Newton: Colin Carter’s Eggs in Perranwell has invested in high standards of hen welfare, and it is understandably concerned, as I am, that cheap eggs—in particular, processed or liquid eggs, which account for 25%

of the market—are coming in from parts of the EU that do not have such high standards. What is my right hon. Friend doing to prevent that?

Mr Paice: As I said in my opening answer, discussions are still going on. There is a further meeting of officials in Brussels next week, and that really is the last chance for the EU to prove that it is serious about improving animal welfare and enforcing its regulations. If, as I fear, no solution comes about next week, I will make an announcement shortly on how we intend to protect our industry.

Pat Glass (North West Durham) (Lab): My constituent Mr Tulip and his family have spent almost £8 million bringing their farm up to the EU directive level. If the meeting next week does not go well, will the considerations include banning eggs from countries that are acting illegally?

Mr Paice: I fully appreciate that UK producers have invested about £400 million in new systems, and they are entitled to expect others to do the same; that is perfectly reasonable. As for the measures that will be taken if we do not get anywhere in Europe—and I cannot claim much optimism on that front—I will make an announcement shortly. A ban has not been ruled out, but I am sure that the hon. Lady will appreciate that there are some pretty big legal issues here.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Given that the British egg industry has spent some £400 million on meeting the requirements of the EU directive, and countries such as Spain, Poland, France and Italy have done everything to avoid their obligations under the directive, should not the Minister say at the EU meeting that unless the Europeans put the right deal on the table, there will be a British unilateral ban to keep illegal eggs out of other EU countries?

Mr Paice: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Some 12 member states will not be in full compliance—some to a much greater degree than others—and he is right that Spain and Poland are among those 12. As I say, we have not ruled out a ban. It is important that the other countries—member states that, like us, will have complied, including most of the northern European countries—work together wherever possible to make sure that we have maximum impact when it comes to forcing compliance elsewhere.

Food Manufacturing

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): What discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills on (a) food prices and (b) support for British food manufacturing. [82278]

Mrs Caroline Spelman: I have, in the normal course of business, discussed food prices and support for food manufacturing as part of the Government's growth review, and we continue to work with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and UK Trade & Investment to help boost growth, exports and efficiency in the whole food chain.

Catherine McKinnell: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Food manufacturing is very important to the north-east, especially to my constituency; firms such as Nestlé, Warburtons and Greggs play a really significant part in the local economy. What specific plans does her Department have, working alongside BIS, to support that vital sector, including through research and development and capital allowances, and by increasing exports, thereby helping to support tens of thousands of jobs in the north-east?

Mrs Spelman: All the firms that the hon. Lady mentions are household names, and indeed the food industry contributes more than £80 billion to the UK economy. As I have said, I have had representatives from the Food and Drink Federation and from agri-food businesses in the Department to ask them what we can do to help them remove barriers to growth in trade. I have very good news to report: for the seventh year in a row, UK exports of food and drink have risen.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Uplands are a vital source of food production in this country, and the Secretary of State will know that they are supported through the uplands entry level scheme. Does she share my concern that money from the scheme is often snaffled by absentee landlords, rather than going to the hard-working tenant farmers who produce the food?

Mrs Spelman: When we announced our £26 million uplands package, one of the things we said we would do is give priority to uplands farmers who want to take up entry-level schemes. We specifically spoke about the need for landlords to back their tenant farmers who want to take advantage of the scheme.

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): Public procurement is a key way of supporting British food production and high food standards, yet the Department for Work and Pensions sources only 11% of its food from UK producers, DEFRA is failing on its own policy for sourcing sustainable fish and the new ethical standards for food served in public institutions were ridiculed in a report this week for being even weaker than those at McDonald's. Will the Secretary of State please stop clowning around with food standards and UK food production jobs and at least try to keep up with Ronald McDonald?

Mrs Spelman: There is no question but that the Government, through procurement choices, can make a big difference to the food and drink industry, which is one of the reasons we set additional requirements on all Departments to buy to higher standards, including sustainable fish, when we announced the guidelines for Government buying standards in September. We do not yet have figures for the most recent month, and no doubt it will take time to adapt to the changes, but the point is that there is a commitment right across central Government to buy to the highest standards that we expect from British food producers.

22 November 2011 Milk: Imports

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much of the UK's milk was imported in the latest period for which figures are available. [74923]

Mr Paice: In 2010, the UK imported 88 million litres of raw milk and 125 million litres of liquid drinking milk. The figures in the following table show the UK production and supply of all milk products on a liquid milk equivalent basis expressed in litres for 2009, the latest year for which these figures are available on this basis. All imports and exports of milk products are included here other than milk products in composite products, e.g. baked goods.

	UK liquid milk production (billion)	Whole milk equivalent of milk and milk product imports (billion)	Whole milk equivalent of milk and milk product exports (billion)	Total new supply (billion)	Production as % of new supply
2009	13.2	6.24	2.84	16.61	80

Source: DEFRA Overseas Trade Statistics

HOUSE OF LORDS

Wednesday 21 December Pig and Poultry Products

Lord Laird: To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the major differences in the United Kingdom and European Union baselines in chicken and pig welfare standards; what are the reasons for those differences; whether they represent a competitive disadvantage to the United Kingdom; and whether they will take steps to ensure that pork on sale in the United Kingdom is labelled according to its welfare provenance. [HL14154]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Defra, (Lord Taylor of Holbeach): Council Directive 2007/43 came into force in 2010 and has provided a harmonised approach to most aspects of meat chicken production across the EU. There is scope within the Directive for Member States to set a maximum stocking density of up to 42kg/r2. The legal maximum stocking density has been set in Great Britain at 39 kg/m2, a decision made on animal welfare grounds. The majority of the UK industry continues to rear meat chickens to Red Tractor standards which set a maximum stocking density of 38 kg/m2. The impact of the Directive on the competitiveness of the broiler industry in Great Britain will be assessed as part of the post implementation review.

On pigs, the UK unilaterally banned sow stalls in 1999 on welfare grounds, following all-party support. Similar EU rules will mean that the rest of Europe will ban sow stalls by 2013, which will help to provide a more level playing field for UK producers.

If any Member State were to seek an extension to the 2013 sow stall ban, the UK would strongly oppose it. We recognise any extension would disadvantage UK producers who have invested heavily in converting to alternative systems. We continue to urge the Commission to learn lessons from the 2012 laying hen conventional cage ban, so that our pig industry is protected in 2013.

There are many routes to educate consumers, one of which could be the use of a label to allow consumers to make informed purchases. However, due to the difficulty in defining animal welfare, the array of labels already on products may not be the most effective route to inform consumers.

Tuesday 20 December 2011

Pig and Poultry Products

Lord Laird: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have drawn any safety concerns to the World Trade Organisation's attention under its sanitary and phytosanitary agreement regarding non-European Union countries exporting pig and poultry products to the United Kingdom.[HL14153]

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: Defra has not raised any concerns to the World Trade Organisation on imports of pig and poultry products into the UK.

The rules for imports from non-European Union (EU) countries to the United Kingdom of animals and animal products, including pig and poultry products, are set at the EU level. All imported meat must come from a country authorised for imports into the EU; from an approved establishment; each consignment must be accompanied by the appropriate animal and public health certification; and must be officially checked on entry to the EU at designated border inspection posts.

If an outbreak of disease occurs in the exporting country, or there are any major deficiencies found that may pose a risk to animal or public health, appropriate safeguard actions on imports will be discussed and voted on by veterinary experts from all 27 EU member states on the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health. These import controls to protect animal and public health are in line with the guidelines established by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), the world organisation of animal health, and the sanitary and phytosanitary agreement of the World Trade Organisation.

Tuesday 20 December 2011

Antimicrobial resistance

Lord Kennedy of Southwark: To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the variation to the pilot study to collect antimicrobial resistance and other relevant data from dairy farms with and without extended-spectrum beta-lactamases E coli.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: All Defra evidence contracts are closely monitored by Defra specialists working with policy colleagues. Contract variations are required if there are significant changes to any of the details in the original agreement (e.g. costs, required outputs, timetable, research team, etc).

This study was commissioned by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate as an initial investigation into the role of antimicrobial usage as a factor influencing the prevalence of E.coli carrying extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs) on dairy farms. At the outset the study was set up for 1 year to explore the feasibility of the approach. Data collected confirmed the feasibility of the proposed methods and so the variation was put in place to strengthen the output. The variation extended the project by one year so that a further 20 ESBL positive and 20 ESBL negative farms could be identified then visited to take samples and carry out the subsequent analyses. As a result of the extra work, the cost of the project increased from £170,525 to £274,483.

Monday 12 December 2011

Retailer margins on milk

Baroness Byford: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Henley on 28 June (WA 411), whether they will in future record in every year the prices charged for milk in one and two pint containers and the volumes produced in each category, as a guide to the profits being made by retailers over and above those currently monitored.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: The Government have no immediate plans to collect and record either wholesale or retail prices and production volumes for drinking milk.

However, we are aware that the EU Commission has this under consideration and we are part of the discussions at Commission management committee meetings.

Wednesday 7 December 2011

Agriculture: Foot and Mouth

The Countess of Mar: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Taylor of Holbeach on 22 November (WA 219-20), how the accuracy of the lateral flow device for the detection of foot and mouth disease virus compares with the accuracy of clinical diagnosis.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: While a positive result from a lateral flow device will confirm a positive suspicion of foot and mouth disease (FMD), a negative result cannot be relied on to confirm absence of disease. False negative results are very likely to be given in cases:

where samples are collected from animals where FMD is suspected but they are showing few clinical signs; from those where disease may be incubating, i.e. in contact animals with no clinical signs but the animal is infected; and where infection has passed through several days earlier and lesions are healing. The laboratory confirmation of field cases therefore remain essential; where more sensitive tests such as real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and virus serotyping assays can be carried out.

Thursday 24 November 2011 Welfare of Laying Hens

Lord Laird: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Henley on 24 November 2010 (*WA 327*), which 11 member states are unlikely to have complied with the European Union welfare of laying hens directive ban on battery cages by 1 January 2012; what is the current annual level of egg and egg product imports from those states; and how they will implement their intention of prohibiting egg and egg product from hens in such cages from entering the United Kingdom.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: All member states were recently asked by the Commission to provide the level of conversion as at 27 September 2011. Likely levels of non-compliance were discussed at a recent meeting in Brussels; to date, the Commission has not published this information. However, at a European Parliament debate in October, the Commission acknowledged for the first time that Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Poland, Portugal and Romania did not expect to be fully compliant. Another five member states had failed to provide any data to the Commission. Discussions on finding a practical solution to the large-scale non-compliance from 1 January 2012 are ongoing in Brussels and we are working hard to ensure that any solution is as tight as possible to protect UK producers. In parallel, we are working with the egg industry, food manufacturers, the food service industry and retailers to look at what we in the UK can do to protect our compliant producers.

Data on shell egg and egg products imported into the UK from each EU member state are provided in the table below:

Flow	Monthly report description	EU Country	Year 2010 (Tonnes)	(£000s)	Year 2011 (Jan-Sep) (Tonnes)	(£000s)
EU Total Imports						
	Shell eggs for consumption					
		Austria			18	19
		Belgium	353	556	118	148
		Denmark	312	394	159	166
		France	4,037	6,391	2,136	2,929
		Germany	3,360	1,923	4,834	5,195
		Greece			0	13
		Irish Republic	4,053	3,000	4,184	2,999
		Italy	222	541	36	137
		Netherlands	11,228	17,530	3,471	5,065
		Poland	881	845	598	541
		Portugal	104	112	69	82
		Spain	9,284	12,032	6,260	8,704
		Sweden			0	42
		Finland	167	146		
	Shell eggs for consumption Total		34,001	43,470	21,883	26,040
	Egg Products for human consumption					
		Austria	165	842	303	619
		Belgium	3,118	4,629	2,069	2,772
		Cyprus			234	34
		Czech Republic	2	8		
		Denmark	1,166	7,144	1,135	7,142
		France	3,659	12,871	2,563	9,932
		Germany	1,479	4,735	1,349	3,993
		Greece			1	7
		Hungary			3	36
		Irish Republic	60	115	55	103
		Italy	1,098	5,292	754	3,430

		Luxembourg	84	339	48	194
		Netherlands	19,119	30,785	12,049	19,932
		Poland	140	648	61	252
		Portugal	0	1		
		Spain	6,051	4,824	3,136	2,682
		Sweden	466	1,580	23	154
	Egg Products for human consumption Total		3,607	73,813	23,783	51,282
Total Imports		EU Total	70,608	117,283	45,666	77,322

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Tuesday 22 November 2011 Foot and Mouth

The Countess of Mar: To ask Her Majesty's Government what research they have funded since 2001 to validate pen-side test kits that verify the presence of foot and mouth disease virus; and whether there are any validated kits available in the United Kingdom.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: Defra provided grants to the Institute for Animal Health (IAH) Pirbright. These grants funded a series of projects relating to the development of diagnostic technologies for FMD.

2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
£99,835	£245,558	£304,748	£321,045	£319,163

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
£311,427	£317,280	£328,267	£415,058	£446,094

The IAH estimate that an average of 20-25 per cent of the total was related to specific research into pen-side test kits.

Further core strategic funding was provided by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council to the IAH to complement FMD research grants. Part of this funding was allocated for the rapid, pen-side FMDv detector kit and is listed below:

2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
£3,900	£17,800	£2,900

Pen-side tests are not currently used as a conclusive diagnostic tool in GB, as the current technology and equipment does not support the determination of negative results in all circumstances. Therefore any samples taken from suspect animals will always need to be submitted for testing at the National Reference Laboratory for FMD, which is IAH Pirbright.

The potential benefits of using pen-side tests in the future will be kept under review as the technology advances. There is currently one lateral flow device commercially available, this device was trialled successfully on one farm during the 2007 UK FMD outbreak, in conjunction with tests carried out at IAH, to diagnose FMD.

Ends