

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

13 August 2020

Dear Mike

As part of my response to the Committee's supplementary questions following the scrutiny session in November 2019, I agreed to provide an update in six months' time on the progress in developing a mandatory scheme for Informed Purchasing and information on the necessary legislative requirements. I also committed to provide an update to you once I had considered the recommendations contained within the review of the Animal Welfare (Dog Breeding) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Informed Purchasing

As we are all aware, the world is a very different place to what it was six months ago, and we as a Government have had to adapt rapidly to the pandemic and the emerging priorities for Wales. To ensure there have been adequate resources available in priority areas in our response to fighting COVID-19, some of our TB policies and pilots have been temporarily paused. This includes the development of a mandatory system for Informed Purchasing. Business as usual is starting to resume and officials are adapting to a new way of working and communicating with our stakeholders to continue delivering the TB Eradication Programme for Wales.

Earlier this year, we opened up the Grant scheme for markets again, which provided cattle markets in Wales the opportunity to upgrade their facilities to allow TB information to be displayed at point of sale on a voluntary basis. As a result of this new round of funding, disappointingly only one market applied out of 25 eligible markets. Making a total of 11 markets with upgraded facilities.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Our aim with re-opening the grant scheme was to give markets another opportunity to apply. Markets are informing us there is a lack of information provided by the sellers or being request by buyers, therefore consequently, vital information on where farmers source cattle from and their TB history is not being shared. I am of the opinion, in the longer-term, only a mandatory system will make sure cattle sellers disclose the disease history of the herd at the point of sale. My intention in the medium term, when resource allows, will be to mandate the provision to provide TB information at point of sale.

To allow Informed Purchasing to be made mandatory, changes would be required to the Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010 which will also require consultation with the industry. However during this time, there is no indication of when legal resource will become available for this subject area, due to pressures as a result of COVID-19 and EU Exit. The Welsh Government have had to consider the immediate priorities of wider policy which require legislative change and consider what can be delivered during the remainder of this Senedd term. Unfortunately any changes to the TB Order will not be possible in this Senedd term.

With the current COVID-19 restrictions in place, farmers who need to source replacement cattle will need to think carefully about the TB history of the animals and herds they have come from, when purchasing.

I would encourage farmers to use the ibTB website (www.ibtb.com) as a means of finding more information about TB in their area and the TB status of herds they purchase from. ibTB has recently been enhanced to show:

- ongoing and resolved TB breakdowns in England and Wales over the past 10 years
- useful links to other relevant sites
- an improved 'help' function
- a clearer representation of the extent of a cluster of breakdowns on the map.

My officials will continue to promote the benefits of informed purchasing to farmers and market operators in Wales. This will include provision of appropriate advice and guidance to farmers and market operators. Work is currently underway on ensuring the TB Hub is made more relevant to users in Wales. We have received positive feedback from the industry on the clear guidance provided for farmers on the TB Hub during COVID-19 and our aim is to continue with that momentum.

Animal Welfare (Dog Breeding) (Wales) Regulations 2014

As mentioned in my Written Statement published on 4th March, some of the recommendations can only be dealt with by legislative change. However, for new regulations to be effective we must also tackle the barriers to enforcement Local Authorities are facing before proposing amendments to the current Breeding Regulations. The need for consistency of inspection and enforcement and effective use of resources by Local Authorities is paramount in ensuring the welfare of breeding dogs and their offspring. Dog breeding premises are not evenly distributed across Wales and this means some Local Authorities are struggling to cope with demands.

With this in mind, following a successful funding bid, work is now underway on a three year pilot project to enable expertise to be built through specialist training, improved guidance and upskilling of dedicated Local Authority staff.

The report recommendations support a ban of third party sales of puppies and kittens, as you know we are currently consulting on this issue.

The combination of new regulations on pet sales, dedicated funding support for improvements to the enforcement and delivery of the existing Breeding Regulations will result in lasting improvements to the welfare standards of puppies bred in Wales.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

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