



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Lord Benyon
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

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Dominic Boulton
Game Farmers Association
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1 July 2022

Dear Dominic,

I am writing regarding your sector's concerns about the impact of the restrictions to trade caused by the ongoing avian influenza (AI) outbreak in France on the viability of the shooting season in Great Britain (GB) this year.

As you know, this has been a particularly difficult year for AI. The UK has had its biggest ever outbreak with 122 confirmed cases in poultry and captive birds (as of 21 June) and France has had an even more significant outbreak within excess of 1,464 cases (as of 22 June, the highest in Europe).

Biosecurity at our GB borders is paramount to protect our game farming and shooting sectors. The restrictions put in place on imports from France ultimately exist to prevent further outbreaks in GB poultry farms and game bird premises.

We fully recognise that any sustained interruption to normal supplies has had a significant impact on businesses who rely on imports of eggs. My officials have been working closely with the European Commission, French Chief Veterinary Officer and French officials to try to find a joint solution which enabled trade from AI affected zones, whilst protecting GB biosecurity. Any solution would require agreement both from us as the importer and from the EU and France as the exporter.

I would like to assure you that we prioritised developing a bespoke approach, however, despite the best efforts of our teams and positive engagement with the Commission and French authorities, it has not been possible to take forward our proposal in time to reduce the impact on the shooting season this year. This is due to a range of external factors out of our control, including the adverse effect of the heatwave in France on egg production.

I know this will be very disappointing, and I appreciate the impact this will have both for your businesses, and for those sectors which support gamebird farming and

shooting activities. While this is not welcome news, I do believe this is a potential mechanism we can deploy in the future, if necessary. We are also exploring future measures to ease trade whilst managing biosecurity implications, during future outbreaks. We will continue to engage closely with the industry as this work develops.

I am very keen to ensure that future seasons are not affected as far as is in our gift, and whilst we will continue to do our best to enable trade whilst protecting biosecurity, given the risks of AI and the reliance on imports, I would also request the sector to look at where there are opportunities to diversify supply chains.

I very much appreciate the constructive engagement that your sector provided to my officials during this period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Benyon." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

THE RT HON LORD BENYON