



To: The Editor, Veterinary Times, Peterborough, PE4 6NA

Dear Editor

The suggestion currently being promoted by the League against Cruel Sports (LACS) supported by a number of misinformed vets that hounds infected with bovine TB are running around the countryside spreading the disease (article, Vet Rec, June 17, 2017) is clearly self serving nonsense. The suggestion demonstrates ignorance of how bovine TB transmits between animals (and humans). It requires protracted exposure to high challenge doses, which clearly is not the case with hunting hounds.

The suggestion comes from anti hunting groups following disclosure earlier this year that a number of hounds of the Kimblewick Hunt were confirmed cases of bovine TB. An informative statement issued by the hunt in February 2017 revealed that hunting activities were voluntarily and immediately suspended from when the first clinical case was diagnosed.

The Kimblewick hounds are probably the unfortunate spill over victims of consuming infected knacker meat, which in turn was and is the result of the appalling build up of infection in cattle and the environment which successive Governments have allowed to happen since the 1990s. Bovine TB was declared "for practical purposes" eradicated in 1960 following a comprehensive programme of cattle tuberculin testing, slaughtering of reactors and culling of the wildlife reservoir, namely badgers. But following the Zuckerman report in 1980 and because of political pressure, the culling of badgers was compromised through the 1980s and 90s and abandoned in 1997; since when the disease has escalated unchecked to the appalling level we see today. Some 35,000 cattle reactors are being slaughtered annually with little prospect of the disease being brought under control given the feeble, misdirected measures currently being employed by Government. Leave it to the farmers, impose ever more cattle restrictions and "Keep bovine TB off the front pages" seems to be the political philosophy at DEFRA.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lewis H. Thomas, secretary VAWM