Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative) Click here to see Sarah Live

Can the Secretary of State confirm that badgers infected with TB and with TB lesions in their kidneys excrete large amounts of TB on to grass? We all get many letters from constituents asking us to ensure that cows have access to grass and are not reared on large factory-scale farms, so surely controlling bovine TB is an important way of ensuring that grass is safer for cows to eat.

Caroline Spelman (Secretary of State, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Meriden, Conservative)

Of course, my hon. Friend has a professional background that helps her to understand epidemiology. However, the important point is that it is beyond doubt that there is transmission between badgers and cattle. The fact that they share pastures and fields means that they can pass the disease between them in the way she has described. Even the Badger Trust would acknowledge that the disease is passing from badgers to cattle, as well as from cattle to cattle. Controlling the badger population in a particular area in the way I have described should indeed help.

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