

April 11

## PRESELI PEMBROKESHIRE AM SEEKS ANSWERS OVER TB CULL

Preseli Pembrokeshire AM Paul Davies has pressed the rural affairs minister for more details about the pilot TB badger cull.

The cull is just one of a package of measures taking place to tackle the bovine TB problem.

Mr Davies asked Elin Jones where and when the cull will take place and asked her for assurance that farmers wouldn't be carrying it out.

"I hope that she agrees that it would be much more sensible if the Government and the authorities were responsible for the process, and that it should not be left to the farmers alone," he told the Senedd.

"The danger of leaving the responsibility to farmers alone is that that could bring down a lot of criticism upon the head of the agricultural industry."

In just eight years the compensation paid to farmers after losing cattle to TB has risen from £1.3 million to £15.2 million. If the disease is allowed to spread unchecked then that figure will reach £30 million by 2012.

In 1997 just 669 cattle were slaughtered in Wales because of TB, last year it was 7,905.

"I very much hope that we will see the back, once and for all, of TB, a disease that has done so much damage in rural Wales," added Mr Davies.

Mrs Jones told him that the pilot cull may take place in Pembrokeshire.

"We will be looking for an area with the highest and most intensive levels of bovine TB and, as we saw in the badgers found dead survey, an area with high percentages of TB in the badger population," she said, adding that Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and the former county of Gwent all qualified.

"I listened carefully to your comments on how we should undertake this cull, as a Government rather than by licensing farmers to do it... these issues will be considered and I will take advice on the most effective and efficient way of doing it.

"In terms of the timetable, one of the first things that we will do is test all the cattle in Wales. We will move to do that in the near future."

