

HUDGHTON ATTACKS “TYPICAL LABOUR REACTION” TO FMD REPORT

Ian Hudghton MEP, SNP Agriculture spokesperson in the European Parliament has today hit back at what he calls a “typical Labour reaction” to a report on Foot and Mouth Disease, passed overwhelmingly in the Parliament in Strasbourg yesterday. The MEP warned last week that UK Labour MEP's were likely to want to tamper with sections of the Kreissl-Droffler report which make embarrassing reading for Tony Blair's government in London. Mr Hudghton has today poured scorn on Labour's backtracking, singling out for particular criticism widely reported comments made by Labour's Gordon Adam MEP.

The cross-party Temporary Committee on Foot and Mouth, spent many months examining evidence from those hit hardest by last year's epidemic, and makes several key recommendations in the event that Europe be faced with a future FMD outbreak. It is critical of the UK Government's handling of the crisis on a number of points but, Mr Hudghton says, instead of trying to learn lessons from the tragedy, Labour MEP's are wasting their time, scurrying about trying to save face.

"The Committee which was set up specifically to look into the outbreak carried out an immense amount of work, which included scrutinising evidence given by people who lived through the mass culls in their home areas. The MEP's reported a number of short-comings in the way the UK Government handled the crisis and it is these criticisms which point the way towards the raft of recommendations they have come up with. Parliament yesterday - with the notable exception of UK Labour members -supported the proposals contained in the Committee's report.

While I am not over-surprised at this typical response from Labour members, I am disgusted that UK Labour MEP's, like Gordon Adam, are now dismissing out of hand the evidence presented by the Committee as “unsubstantiated” opinion. Kreissl-Dorfler's report criticises the UK authorities for their failure to give sufficient attention to the views and concerns of local people in the regions affected. Mr Adam's reaction proves the point. He's not interested in listening and learning from the bitter experiences of last year. All he wants to do is to belittle the comments made by those whose livelihoods were torn to shreds by last year's FMD outbreak.

This is exactly the sort of reaction which puts the European Union in a bad light, where politicians are keener to save their, or their pal's skins, rather than looking for ways to resolve the problems their constituents face.

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