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Armstrong demands effective strategy be adopted to combat Bovine TB and put an end to a shocking waste of public resources

Mid-Ulster MLA Billy Armstrong has welcomed the comments by Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, regarding Bovine TB, at the King's Hall in Belfast yesterday.

Mr Armstrong, himself a cattle-breeder said;

“The comments by Prince Edward, in which he recognised that the challenge posed by Bovine TB is “one of the largest facing the rural landscape” and “worrying for the Health of the countryside”, will be welcomed by all those who are sick and tired of waiting for effective Government action.

His comments come in the same week as the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee highlighted the fact that the Department of Agriculture has spent an unbelievable £200 million over the past ten years in a bid to control Bovine TB. This of course does not take account of the cost to farmers and the stress created.

At best it could be said they have “contained” the disease, but both the general public and farmers have a right to expect much better value for money than this. I quite agree with the Committee Report that there has been a “lack of direction and progress in addressing the issue of Bovine TB transmission by wildlife.”

Farmers and stock-breeders are sick and tired of what seems to be the pointless testing of cattle every few months, creating stress for animals and the farmer. Most farmers believe that a major cause lies in the badger population. More than enough time and money has been wasted. This issue has to be addressed once and for all, in a genuine bid to secure a permanent solution. In light of the current state of the economy we simply cannot spend another ten years and £200 million to find ourselves no further forward.

The Agriculture Minister and her Department simply must do better.”

ENDS