

Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP
Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

8th May 2002

Dear Mrs Beckett

Cumbria Inquiry into Foot and Mouth Disease

As you may be aware the Cumbria County Council has initiated a 'local' Inquiry into the recent Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. The Inquiry, which has just formally commenced, has been asked to undertake a wide-ranging examination. This will cover the outbreak and its control; advice and communication issues; organisational capacity; the impact on Cumbria's economy; recovery and regeneration; and policy developments and future strategies.

I am writing as Chairman of the Inquiry to seek the help of your Department in the completion of our task. We would be delighted to receive evidence from the Department, either through yourself or one of your parliamentary colleagues, if that were possible, or alternatively to have access to one of the Department's senior veterinary officers.

However, failing that, we understand from the DEFRA 'Comments to Local Inquiries' that your Department is prepared to assist by providing information in response to written questions and we should very much wish to avail ourselves of that offer.

I therefore enclose a list of questions that have arisen as a result of the initial examination of written evidence. Any help that your Department could provide would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Professor P.C. Thomas
Inquiry Chairman