

## A KING SIZED COCK UP...

...actually a disaster for organic and free-range poultry; and a body blow for good sense, proportionality and rational thinking seems inevitable following Professor Sir David King's statements about Avian Flu.

The government's Chief Scientific Advisor rightly concludes that Avian Flu is likely to become endemic in our wild bird population for a significant period. Then with a patrician-like carelessness, nonchalantly consigns organic and free-range poultry production to oblivion.

All poultry will have to be kept indoors for the duration – up to five years – is Dr. King's decision; regardless of the fact people increasingly want outdoor poultry products; regardless of the fact that indoor, industrialised systems seem to be closely implicated with the genesis and spread of this virus; regardless of the evidence that the transmission of the virus from wild birds to extensive, outdoor poultry systems is much less likely than was initially feared; and crucially, regardless of the fact that preventative vaccination provides a sure, proven and scientifically robust way of protecting outdoor poultry from the virus.

There has been much misinformation about the efficacy of preventative vaccine because of a combination of agendas and muddled thinking - the classic ingredients of a cock-up. The fact is it does work and can effectively protect organic poultry against Avian Flu.

Dr. King is a man of much influence and through that power in government. He is obviously a man of great intellect but he is not a virologist, nor a veterinary epidemiologist – many of whom support the case for vaccination. As in the FMD epidemic he is blinkered to the value of vaccination or he is pursuing another agenda to do with global trade about which he is less than transparent.

Others in government and, in particular, Defra should be standing up for the organic sector – one of the few bright areas in the agriculture and food system. Dr King should not go unchallenged in his proposal to destroy the organic poultry sector.

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