

# NewsLetter



## Meat smuggling crisis risks major disease outbreak

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has published a report "Biosecurity at the border: Britain's illegal meat crisis" in which it states: "Alarming amounts of meat and dairy products are now being illegally imported to Great Britain for both personal consumption and sale".

The authors of the report also state that there is no clear, publicly available data showing the scale and nature of the illegal meat entering the country and its destination, as they warn of large and increasing volumes of illegally imported meat finding its way on to high streets, farms, markets, restaurants and kitchen tables.

In March, the Committee visited the Port of Dover and witnessed a van being searched with meat found packaged in plastic bags and newspaper, stowed in cardboard boxes and in a defrosted chest freezer. Workers from Dover Port Health Authority (DPHA) told the Committee that, "there are literally hundreds of targeted vehicles driving straight past as we do not have the resources to stop and search".

## What's the risk?

The report highlights that illegal meat imports, which have been increasing for a number of years under a succession of Governments, carry a high risk of animal diseases that threaten food security, farming and the economy. Some of the most serious animal diseases, like foot and mouth disease and African swine fever (ASF), can travel long distances and cross borders in contaminated meat and dairy products.

Illegally imported meat also poses a serious health risk to consumers, as the conditions of slaughter, handling and storage are unknown and unregulated, meaning it is more likely to carry bacteria, viruses, and parasites that cause illness in humans.

## Conclusion

The Committee's report contests Defra's reassurance that 'intelligence led checks' are being performed at the border, instead summarising the reality on the ground as "a limited and incomplete intelligence network, strained enforcement capability, and port facilities unsuitable for seizing significant volumes of potentially contaminated meat".

The report finds that there is currently no effective deterrent to meat smuggling. MPs call on Defra to deliver a plan to immediately start fining and prosecuting repeat offenders and those who are attempting to smuggle significant amounts of animal products.

## More information

- [Meat smuggling crisis risks major disease outbreak, warn MPs](#)
- ["Biosecurity at the border: Britain's illegal meat crisis"](#)