

THE VERDERERS DECISION NOT TO MARK CATTLE

Presentment by:-

Ms Debbie Stokes – Practising Commoner and Cattle Owner

Robert Stride – Practising Commoner and Cattle owner

Mrs Charlotte Lines - Practising Commoner

We would like to commend the Verderers and Agisters on their professional and Covid safe approach to the pony drifts this season. We are however at a loss to understand why these now established protocols cannot be applied to cattle marking, which is equally important as pony welfare. It is disappointing that that there was no consultation with cattle owners before the decision was made.

The marking of cattle requires only the owners and the Agister to be present, as well as the Vet if carried out in conjunction with the annual TB test. Social distancing is possible and the procedure on most holdings is undertaken outside.

We are concerned that the cattle will not be subject to the same welfare checks as the ponies. It is imperative that the Agister assesses both the temperament and condition of the cattle at close quarters before they are approved for turnout. In addition, it also gives new cattle owners the opportunity to seek expert advice from the agisters. If cattle will not be marked, what new procedures have the Verderers put in place to ensure only healthy animals are turned out?

We ask that the Court:

1. Re-considers the decision not to mark cattle for 2021.
2. If this decision is not reversed, we ask that the Verderers identify mitigating actions to ensure only animals meeting the DEFRA condition standards are turned out.
3. Provides reassurance to commoners that this will not be a long-term change and that the traditional role of the Agister as marksman is maintained.