Dear MP

I am writing with outrage re the Government support of MBR Acres, laboratory beagle breeders at Sawtry Way, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 2DT. MBR stands for Marshall BioResources, which is a global laboratory animal breeders, with a long list of gross welfare violations. After their beagle breeding site in Italy was closed and the directors imprisoned for animal welfare violations, in 2017 MBR moved their beagle breeding to the UK citing it to be less restrictive.

Recently the Government implied MBR Acres is a designated site for National Security. This is an alarming development, not least of all, because it cannot be true and it is simply scaremongering the public at large.

MP Question 67587 answered on 17th July 25

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-07-14/67587>

**Ben Obese-Jecty MP 14th July 25**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 11 July 2025 to question 64795 on MBR Acres, what are the nature of the national security concerns regarding the site.

**Feryal Clark MP 17th July 25**

MBR Acres is a critical part of the UK’s preclinical research infrastructure, which in turn is crucial for domestic pandemic preparedness. Another pandemic is the top rated risk in the National Risk Register and discovery and development of therapeutics and vaccines, which relies on preclinical research, is one of the outcomes of the UK Biological Security Strategy.

Breeding beagles for use in preclinical testing may have once been accepted as standard, but science has moved on. To claim that MBR Acres is vital to national security is to mistake tradition for progress. In fact, continuing to pour resources of time, funding, and intellectual capital into an archaic system that overwhelmingly fails to translate to human benefit undermines our ability to respond effectively to the next pandemic. True biological security demands a modern, scientifically sound research infrastructure, one that embraces innovation, not 20th-century relics.

I agree that pandemic preparedness is crucial and that nobody should doubt its importance. However to be fully, properly prepared,it is essential to have the right research tools at our disposal. Animals for use in developing and testing new vaccines and therapies are demonstrably poor tools, which do not predict human biology, disease responses, or therapeutic potential. The claim that MBR Acres is “a critical part” of the UK’s pandemic preparedness overlooks the hard scientific evidence proving animal testing is a failed methodology outdated by many modern research methodologies.

The evidence already available is substantial and clear. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), two of the world’s most influential scientific agencies, have acknowledged that 95% of drugs found safe and effective in animal tests go on to fail in human trials, due to toxicity (side effects) or lack of efficacy (i.e. the drug does not produce the desired effect). This dismal track record exposes the dangers of relying on outdated, animal-based approaches to develop urgently needed therapeutics and vaccines. Ref: 1, 2 and 3

These failures cannot be reversed by improving animal tests due to the significant and widespread biological differences between the animal species used in drug testing and humans. Ref: 4 and 5

In response to these failures, the FDA has announced a firm plan to phase out the use of animals to test new drugs and vaccines, and to replace animals with advanced, human-relevant technologies like organs-on-chips, organoids, artificial intelligence, and systems biology all which now offer powerful tools for modelling human disease and predicting drug responses far more accurately than any animal ever could. Ref: 6

Furthermore the FDA commissioner, Martin A. Makary, M.D., M.P.H., noted that: *“For too long, drug manufacturers have performed additional animal testing of drugs that have data in broad human use internationally. This initiative marks a paradigm shift in drug evaluation and holds promise to accelerate cures and meaningful treatments for Americans while reducing animal use…By leveraging AI-based computational modelling, human organ model-based lab testing, and real-world human data, we can get safer treatments to patients faster and more reliably, while also reducing R&D costs and drug prices. It is a win-win for public health and ethics.”*

To illustrate: the retesting of 27 drugs using human liver-chips, for which liver toxicity/non-toxicity had been poorly predicted by animal tests, resulted in considerable improvement in correct results. The researchers estimated that the wider replacement of animal tests with human organ-chips in drug development could be worth $24 billion in increased R&D productivity for the pharmaceutical industry, with consequent benefits to patients.

Ref: 7,8 and 9

Specifically re COVID see Ref: 10 article in Science and the response of Bailey/Balls at the bottom of the page.

On top of this, we do not have the *time* to use animals in a response to any new pandemic, using animal tests, even if they were scientifically valid and predictive for humans (which they are not), takes too long. The COVID-19 response included a break from the linear process requiring animal trials before clinical trials with human relevant research approaches being prioritised in the search for a vaccine, setting a powerful precedent for how medical research is carried out.

Ignoring the overwhelming evidence, and stubbornly supporting the breeding and use of animals as we seek to protect the population from emerging diseases, is ethically wrong and scientifically counter-productive. Animals and humans will pay the price. We could better and more quickly protect humans if we leave animals out of the equation and embrace the superior technologies that science has put at our disposal. It is a dereliction of duty not to take immediate action to modernise science. It is time to align our national strategy with 21st century ethics and science. The national security line is quite simply not supported by evidence.

I would appreciate if you could ask:

1. The source of the Government information that MBR Acres is critical to pandemic planning.
2. How many beagles from MBR Acres were used in the UK to develop a COVID vaccine and what part, if any, did they contribute to critical data?
3. Over the last 10 years in the UK how many and how were MBR beagles used to develop pandemic vaccines. Please can I have links to the relevant non-technical summaries.
4. For any non-pandemic vaccines developed for humans using beagles from MBR Acres - How many have been licenced for human use? Were any of these later withdrawn or were contradictions added? What was the contribution from the beagle data?
5. Previously MBR Acres have testified in the High Court that all beagles bred there are sold to UK toxicity laboratories. Can the Government confirm these Contract Research Organisations like Labcorp, Charles River and Sequani have used MBR beagles for pre-clinical work on potential pandemic vaccines.

Please see references and links below

Yours Sincerely

**Your name and address (to show that you are a constituent)**

**References and Links**

1. Thomas DW, Chancellor D, Micklus A et al. Clinical development success rates and contributing factors 2011-2020. [Link](https://www.bio.org/clinical-development-success-rates-and-contributing-factors-2011-2020)
2. Bailey J, Thew M, Balls M. Predicting human drug toxicity and safety via animal tests: can any one species predict drug toxicity in any other, and do monkeys help? Altern Lab Anim 2015;43:393-403. [Link](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/026119291504300607)
3. Bailey J, Balls M. Recent efforts to elucidate the scientific validity of animal-based drug tests by the pharmaceutical industry, pro-testing lobby groups, and animal welfare organisations. BMC Med Ethics 2019;20:16. [Link](https://bmcmedethics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12910-019-0352-3)
4. Bailey J. Monkey-based research on human disease: the implications of genetic differences. Altern Lab Anim 2014;42:287-317. [Link](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/026119291404200504)

1. Bailey J. Genetic modification of animals: scientific and ethical concerns. In: Herrmann K, Jayne K, editors. Animal experimentation: working towards a paradigm change. Boston, USA: Brill; 2019. p. 443-479. [Link](https://brill.com/edcollbook-oa/title/35072)
2. “FDA Announces Plan to Phase Out Animal Testing Requirement for Monoclonal Antibodies and Other Drugs.” [Link](https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-announces-plan-phase-out-animal-testing-requirement-monoclonal-antibodies-and-other-drugs)
3. Zhang CJ, Meyer SR, O’Meara MJ et al. A Human Liver Organoid Screening Platform for DILI Risk Prediction. *J Hepatol* 2023S0168-8278(23)00072. [Link](https://www.journal-of-hepatology.eu/article/S0168-8278%2823%2900072-7/fulltext)

1. Levner D, Ewart L. Integrating Liver-Chip data into pharmaceutical decision-making processes. *Expert Opin Drug Discov* 2023;18:1313-1320. [Link](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17460441.2023.2255127#abstract)

1. Taylor K, Ram R, Ewart L et al. Perspective: How complex in vitro models are addressing the challenges of predicting drug-induced liver injury. *Frontiers in Drug Discovery* 2025;Volume 5 – 2025 [Link](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/drug-discovery/articles/10.3389/fddsv.2025.1536756/full)
2. Please scroll down to see 16 Oct 2020 E-Letter Repeating Nonhuman Primate Tests of COVID-19 Vaccines is a Folly: Human Vaccine Development Must Focus on Human Biology. Bailey/Balls at Cohen Jon. 09.10. 2020. A call to test new vaccines head to head, in monkeys - Proposed comparison study could clarify safety and which vaccines work best. [Link](https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.370.6513.154)