

“Exterminate All Cats in Britain”: Culling Pet Cats at Start of Pandemic, Says Former U.K Minister

Lord Bethell says ‘there was an idea at one moment that we might have to ask the public to exterminate all the cats in Britain’

By [Gavin Cordon](#)

Global Research, March 02, 2023

[The Independent](#) 1 March 2023

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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Ministers briefly considered ordering all domestic [cats](#) in Britain to be killed amid fears they could be spreading [Covid](#), a former health minister has said.

Lord Bethell said the concern about pets underlined how little was known about the disease at the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020.

“What we shouldn’t forget is how little we understood about this disease,” he told [Channel 4 News](#). “There was a moment we were very unclear about whether domestic pets could transmit the disease.

“In fact, there was an idea at one moment that we might have to ask the public to exterminate all the cats in Britain. Can you imagine what would have happened if we had wanted to do that?

“And yet, for a moment there was a bit of evidence around that so that had to be investigated and closed down.”

Lord Bethell was Matt Hancock’s deputy in the Department of Health and Social from 2020 to 2021.

His comments came after *The Telegraph* began publishing details of tens of thousands of leaked Whatsapp messages exchanged between Mr Hancock and other senior figures during the pandemic.

Mr Hancock is fighting claims he rejected advice while health secretary to give Covid tests to all residents going into English care homes.

Mr Hancock’s spokesman said a report claiming he rejected clinical advice on care home testing was “flat wrong” because he was told it was “not currently possible” to carry out the tests.

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