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On the sixth day of Christmas... [1]

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My true love sent to me: six geese a-laying. In the song, this seems to refer to the six days of creation.

But talk of geese or turkeys makes me think rather of destruction - the destruction of birds due to bird flu, and indeed cattle due to BSE and foot & mouth. I don't know how much of these disasters should be put down to the diseases themselves and how much should be put down to government incompetence. When you have officialdom closing down agriculture for months on end and slaughtering tens of thousands of animals; viruses escaping from government research centres; Edwina Currie putting the nation off its eggs; Sir Liam Donaldson scaring us with the prospect of 50,000 human deaths from bird flu, then maybe government is the bigger threat.

That, of course, and the interest groups. These scarces are all very useful material for those who want us to give up eating meat entirely, those who want to protect UK agriculture from foreign imports, and those who are just against the modern international economy and want us to stop flying, stay at home, and live quietly in cabins on our smallholdings. In the scheme of things, AIDS, malaria, filthy water and road accidents are all bigger killers. Why don't we focus a bit more attention on them?

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