



'Typical! I knew this Government would find a way to wriggle out of paying compensation'

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# Mad Cow meal destroyed my daughter's life

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By **LUKE HARDING**

A **TEENAGE** girl may have caught the human form of Mad Cow disease by eating a contaminated burger, it was claimed last night.

Vicky Rimmer, 16, has the killer Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

The burger claim is investigated tomorrow in a Channel 4 documentary, *Dispatches*.

If proved, it would be the first known link between CJD and the food chain.

Vicky's mother Beryl said yesterday: 'I'm convinced she got the disease from a burger.'

'She's never been ill in her life. She was the healthiest child on earth. But she's always loved meat.'

Vicky, who is blind and unable to talk, move or eat, was admitted to

the isolation unit of a Merseyside hospital four months ago.

Yesterday she was reported to have scrawled 'I want my life back' on a calendar next to her bed.

Vicky started feeling unwell last May. She lost weight drastically, suffered shaking fits and could not hold a cup of coffee.

## Mystery

Mrs Rimmer claims she was visited by a doctor from the Government's CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh, who warned her not to go public over her daughter's plight.

She reportedly said: 'He said "Think of the economy, think of the Common Market." He told me Vicky had weeks, maybe a month, to live.'

The schoolgirl has never had any hormonal treatment or surgery — the normal way CJD is transmitted — but doctors believe she may have

contracted the disease from her love of animals.

Mrs Rimmer added: 'I want the doctors to be open about everything that has happened. This is a child's life.'

CJD attacks the nervous system and brain, turning it into a sponge. It kills 30 people a year in Britain but the cause of the illness remains a mystery.

Government experts have always insisted that the disease can only be transmitted through growth hormones or blood transfusions.

But now Health Department officials admit Vicky could not have caught the disease through 'known causes'.

A spokesman said last night: 'We are aware of this case but it is not our policy to comment on individual cases.'

The case is being monitored by the CJD team in Edinburgh. No link between CJD and BSE has ever been proven.

It was impossible, she added, to speculate on what might cause a person's death until a post mortem had been carried out.

## Turn off TV, says the Pope

THE Pope attacked television yesterday as a major threat to family life.

Children are learning false values from scenes of sex and violence, manipulative news shows and advertisements which appeal to base instincts, he said.

John Paul warned: 'Parents who make regular, prolonged use of television as a kind of electronic babysitter surrender their role as the primary educators of their children.'

In a message for the Catholic Church's 38th World Day of Communications, he urged parents

industry develop a strict, legally enforceable code of ethics to safeguard children.

The Pope said that the effects of TV were mostly negative. Even when individual programmes were not morally objectionable, TV still isolated family members from the chance

He added: 'Forming children's viewing habits will sometimes mean simply turning off the television set, because there are better things to do, because consideration for other family members requires it, or because indiscriminate television viewing can be