

Bio-security Procedures for Fisheries Inspection of Marine Fish Farms

Background

The Provincial Fisheries Act permits Inspectors to enter premises and/or pass over private property without being liable for trespass for inspection of farm sites as specified in the Act. The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that inspectors are aware of the fish health and disease implications arising from the movement of personnel, boats, equipment and other materials that could result in the inadvertent transfer of pathogenic agents between fish farm sites and/or companies. The protocol is designed to minimize the risk of compromising the health of farm sites yet enable Inspectors to perform inspection duties as required.

BC Fisheries has an obligation to ensure that their actions do not increase the risk of transmission of salmon diseases between farm sites. As such these criteria should be considered as a minimal standard. Industry may have more stringent or additional protocols to deal with specific concerns that inspectors must follow. Compliance with these additional company procedures will further reduced risk of disease transmission.

Investigations related to possible violations or complaints require no formal advance notice to the company. In this case, Inspectors should attempt to limit inspection to one site or a limited number of sites thus reducing the potential for disease transmission between sites.

Rationale: Transmission of disease agents can occur through fomites (equipment, boots, boats, sampling gear etc.), personnel visiting the sites or abiotic elements such as air and water. To reduce the risk of transmission of disease agents between sites, strict disinfection procedures and bio-security protocols should be followed.

Notification for routine site inspections

For routine site inspections, site visits for collection of samples or other scientific/project based reason, Inspectors should provide the company in question 48 hours notice prior to the visit. The Inspector should ask the appropriate personnel, preferably the Area/Site Manager or Fish Health Manager for that company, if there is a particular order with which sites should be inspected. Any particular fish health concerns that a company may have where site access should be limited (example algae bloom, disease concern) can be addressed at this time.

Wherever possible, efforts should be made to inspect only sites within one company per day to avoid the potential transfer of disease agents between companies.

Investigations related to possible violations or complaints require no formal advance notice to the company. In this case, Inspectors should attempt to limit

inspection to one site or a limited number of sites thus reducing the potential for disease transmission between sites.

Rationale: Younger fish first introduced to sea sites may be naive and more susceptible to potential pathogenic agents than older fish. To reduce the potential risk of transfer of disease from older fish to younger naive stocks or transmission of agents to valuable broodfish stocks, farms will often set out an order in which sites should be inspected. If there is a fish health concern at a particular site (example: an algae bloom or a disease present that has not been identified at another site), Inspectors should ensure that site is inspected last. No additional sites should be visited prior to complete disinfection of the boat and bilge.

Disinfection procedures prior to site inspection

All boats, safety gear, personal gear, protective clothing, raingear and boots must be disinfected and clean prior to site visit. Boots and other personal gear should be sprayed or otherwise scrubbed with a clean solution of iodine (examples: betadine, ovadyne or wescodyne), Savlon, or Virkon diluted in water as per the label instructions for equipment disinfection.

Boats and other gear should be free of visible dirt and organic matter. Boats should be cleaned and bilge disinfected with mild chlorine or bleach solution prior to site inspections and, if possible, between companies. Bilge water and pumps should not be operated in the vicinity of farms.

Disinfection procedures during site inspections

Footbaths should be available for disinfecting boots at all sites at designated docking points. In the event no footbath is visible/available, Inspectors should have on board the boat equipment for disinfection of boots between sites. This should include a spray bottle with a dilute solution of disinfectant or a plastic tote or bucket with scrub brush and disinfectant.

Inspectors who are in contact with fish, fish feed, mortalities and related equipment during a site visit should disinfect all personal gear and equipment and wash hands thoroughly.

Disinfection procedures after site inspections

All equipment and personal gear should be thoroughly disinfected, cleaned and dried between inspections with a dilute solution of iodine, Savlon, Virkon or other cleanser recognized as effective against fish pathogens.