
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

FISH HEALTH REPORT

The Province of British Columbia has a comprehensive health management program for salmon aquaculture, which uses an extremely precautionary approach. This program requires on-farm health management plans, mandatory monitoring and reporting of disease events, and government audits of industry-reported information, including sea lice.

Fish Health Program

- Ensures a comprehensive approach to aquaculture health management
- Fish Health Management Plan is the cornerstone of the program
- Plans encompass all aspects of farming that can affect the health of animals being farmed
- By law, B.C. fish farms must have a Fish Health Management Plan
- These plans are enforced as a condition of licence

The Fish Health Audit

- Conducted between 2003 and 2005
- 339 salmon farm random audits (visits) were done
- Every operating farm checked a minimum of twice yearly
- Tests done at the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands' Animal Health Centre laboratory
- The lab is one of only two in Canada accredited to meet all the requirements of the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
- Audit confirms industry is meeting health management requirements

Sea Lice

- 96 audits conducted
- 5,493 fish examined for sea lice
- Since 2003, a sea lice management strategy must be included in the farm's FHMP
- Government actively monitors sea lice occurrence and treatments
- Industry is required by law to conduct monthly inspections and report publicly on sea lice numbers (numbers available at: www.al.gov.bc.ca/ahc/fish_health/sealice.htm)
- Harvest and/or treatment triggers set at three lice per fish, one of the most stringent triggers in the world
- Trigger levels set to reduce any potential impact from sea lice on farms to young out-migrating salmon (Scotland and Chile, two of world's largest aquaculture regions, have no treatment triggers)
- Norway does have treatment triggers, but they're considered to be less stringent than B.C.'s
- Early detection is critical in managing lice. To reduce any potential impact of the presence of lice on farms during smolt out-migration (March – July), industry increases the frequency of monitoring and, should the trigger level be exceeded, treatment (prescribed by company fish health veterinarian, including harvest) is initiated.
- B.C.'s audit confirms the accuracy of industry reports

Disease Identified from Fish Mortalities*

- 1,909 dead farmed fish tested for disease or disease causing agents
- Industry publicly reports less than two per cent of all mortalities caused by infectious disease
- All diseases found have been previously reported in British Columbia from wild, hatchery-reared or research salmonids
- No new or exotic disease found

*A finding of disease does not indicate an epidemic.

Regulatory Framework

- 100 checks and balances reviewed at each farm
- Very high compliance, in the 90-100 per cent range, with minor infractions quickly dealt with

B.C.'s Aquaculture Industry

- World's fourth-largest farmed salmon producer, after Norway, Chile and Scotland
- 2005 farm gate value nearly \$320 million (Statistics Canada)
- Approximately 133 sites with 60 to 80 operating at any one time
- Annually generates over \$50 million in wages
- Approximately 4,000 jobs
- Women and First Nations fill over 50 per cent of aquaculture jobs

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