
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

FISH HEALTH REPORT 2006

The Province of British Columbia has a comprehensive health management program for salmon aquaculture, which uses a 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. By law, B.C. fish farms must have a Fish Health Management Plan (FHMP), and these plans are enforced as a condition of the licence.

The Fish Health Audit

- Between January and December 2006, 108 salmon farm random audits (visits) were conducted and samples were available from 102 of those farms.
- Every actively producing farm is assessed for health at least twice yearly.
- Laboratory tests are performed at the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands' Animal Health Centre.
- Audits confirm that industry is meeting health management requirements.

Sea Lice

- Forty-seven audits were conducted and 2,764 fish were examined by ministry personnel for sea lice.
- Industry farm staff assessed 37,440 fish, identifying no disease findings that had not already been reported in wild, hatchery-reared or research salmonids in B.C.
- Since 2003, a sea lice management strategy must be included in the farms' FHMP.
- The ministry actively monitors sea lice occurrence and treatments.
- Industry is required – by law – to conduct monthly inspections and report publicly on sea lice numbers (data is available at: www.al.gov.bc.ca/ahc/fish_health/sealice.htm).
- Management triggers in B.C. set at three lice per fish, one of the most stringent trigger levels in the world.
- To reduce any potential impact of lice on farms during smolt out-migration (March – July), industry increases the frequency of monitoring. Should the trigger level be exceeded, harvest or treatment (prescribed by a fish health veterinarian) is initiated.

Disease Identified from Fish Mortalities

- Tested 644 dead farmed fish for disease or disease-causing agents.
- Expected mortality reported from B.C. salmon farms ranges from two to six per cent.
- All diseases found have been previously reported in B.C. from wild, hatchery-reared or research salmonids. No new or exotic disease found.

B.C.'s Aquaculture Industry

- World's fourth-largest farmed salmon producer, after Norway, Chile and Scotland.
- 2006 farm gate value was \$407.4 million (Statistics Canada).
- Approximately 130 sites with 60 to 80 operating at any one time.
- Annually generates over \$50 million in wages and creates approximately 2,900 jobs.
- Women and First Nations fill over 50 per cent of aquaculture jobs.

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