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Protecting Canada's Aquatic Species from Disease – a Focus on Canada's Pacific Region

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The protection of Canada's natural resources is a top priority of the Government of Canada. We have and will continue to work diligently to ensure there are stringent federal regulations in place to protect Canada's aquatic species (farmed and wild) from disease.

National Aquatic Animal Health Program – Protecting Aquatic Animals

The Government of Canada's National Aquatic Animal Health Program (NAAHP) is a science-based regulatory program. The program is consistent with international standards set by the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#).

This program is responsible for preventing aquatic animal disease in finfish, mollusks, and crustaceans from being introduced to, and from spreading in, Canada. This includes saltwater and freshwater aquatic environments across the country.

Under the *Health of Animals Act*, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the lead government agency for the National Aquatic Animal Health Program. As the lead federal authority, CFIA is responsible for administration and enforcement of the program. Fisheries and Oceans Canada works closely with the Agency. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans provides the laboratory and research expertise through the National Aquatic Animal Laboratory System. Learn more about the [National Aquatic Animal Health Program](#).

Monitoring for diseases in aquaculture facilities in British Columbia

The Canadian aquaculture industry operates under some of the strictest regulations in the world to minimize the risk to the environment. All aquaculture operations are subject to frequent monitoring to ensure high standards of environmental performance. Our regulations are underpinned with the latest scientific research, which gives us the assurance that the environmental effects of aquaculture can be managed.

These measures protect Canada's fisheries resources from diseases such as Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus (ISAV), as well as all other fish diseases of concern, whether from bacterial, viral or parasitic sources.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada assumed responsibility for the regulation of the aquaculture industry in B.C., including the management of fish health, in December 2010. Since then, the Department's health monitoring and surveillance program in B.C. has inspected more than 55 salmon farms, and more than 200 fish were sampled and tested for a variety of diseases, including Infectious Salmon Anaemia. Under this program, Fisheries and Oceans Canada personnel collect freshly dead fish carcasses at the salmon farms, which are pooled and screened using state-of-the-art and internationally accepted [Polymerase Chain Reaction \(PCR\) techniques](#) for the following pathogens of concern to the Pacific Region of Canada:

- Infectious Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus (IHNV)
- Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis Virus (IPNV)
- Infectious Salmon Anaemia Virus (ISAV)
- Viral Hemorrhagic Septicaemia (VHSV - North American strain IVa)
- *Piscirickettsia salmonis*

Prior to the Department assuming jurisdiction over the management of the aquaculture industry in B.C. in December of 2010, the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture operated a scientifically designed surveillance program with complete cooperation by all salmon farmers that tested over 4,700 farmed salmon for a variety of diseases, including ISAV. [See B.C. Ministry of Agriculture's Annual Fish Health Reports from 2003-2010.](#)

All tests of farmed fish for Infectious Salmon Anaemia Virus, both those conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada this year, and by the BC agency previously, have been found to be free of the ISA virus.

Some other examples of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's protection measures include:

- Transfers of fish in Canada into wild fish habitat are reviewed by a Fisheries and Oceans Canada-led Introductions and Transfers Committee for risks associated with genetics, ecology and diseases, including Infectious Salmon Anaemia. Live fish and eggs transferred between locations in Canada or introduced from outside Canada, *must not* carry disease agents that may be harmful to wild populations.
- See the [National Code on Introductions and Transfers of Aquatic Organisms](#) for more details.
- Under the Fish Health Protection Regulations, facilities in Canada serving as a source of eggs for import, for example to other provinces or territories, must undergo rigorous health testing prior to the issuance of a permit authorizing the import of eggs. Facilities outside of Canada must meet equivalent standards.
- In British Columbia, before being introduced to salmon farms, eggs and the resulting progeny are held in strict quarantine, and undergo rigorous health testing throughout the quarantine period before they are approved for transfer to sea water.
- Under the Atlantic Salmon Import Policy, only surface disinfected fertilized eggs are permitted for import into B.C. The egg disinfection procedure that is used is highly effective against ISAV and other pathogens.

Supplementary Disease Testing by Fisheries and Oceans Canada Scientists:

Under the Program for Aquaculture Regulatory Research, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has tested more than 550 wild sockeye salmon from the Strait of Georgia in the last few years and all have tested negative for the Infectious Salmon Anaemia Virus. An additional 817 wild sockeye have been collected and will be tested for Infectious Salmon Anaemia and other pathogens in the near future. This testing is being conducted using validated diagnostic methods for the detection of ISAV developed within the National Aquatic Animal Health Program.

Aquaculture Industry Sharing Responsibility for Animal Health in B.C. - Health Management Plans

In British Columbia, Fisheries and Oceans requires that marine salmon operators submit Health Management Plans as part of its regulatory regime. These plans, among other matters, lay out the protocols the licence holder has in place to minimize the chances of a disease outbreak occurring and to ensure that the health of aquaculture fish is regularly monitored by both private and government veterinarians and biologists.

In addition to greater than 100 annual DFO Fish Health and Surveillance audits, marine facility operators in British Columbia are also required as a legal condition of licence to provide quarterly fish health and mortality reports to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for review by DFO's Aquaculture Management veterinarians to monitor for any early indications of emerging or exotic pathogens. In the event of a fish health or major mortality event, operators must notify DFO within 48 hours (2010 condition of licence) 24 hours (proposed licence condition), as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and implement farm protocols to manage the disease outbreak and undertake any special measures that may be imposed.

For Related Information:

[Canada Completes Infectious Salmon Anaemia Testing: No Confirmed Cases in BC Salmon \(CFIA\)](#)

[Statement from the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Keith Ashfield, on Negative Infectious Salmon Anaemia Test Results in British Columbia Salmon \(DFO\)](#)

[Fact sheet: Infectious Salmon Anaemia \(CFIA\)](#)

[Infectious Salmon Anaemia \(ISA\) Virus – Accepted Testing Methods \(DFO\)](#)

[No Confirmed Cases of Infectious Salmon Anaemia in British Columbia \(CFIA\)](#)

[Statement from the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Keith Ashfield and British Columbia Minister of Agriculture, Don McRae on new test results indicating that there are no confirmed cases of ISA in British Columbia Salmon \(DFO\)](#)

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