

Dear Gaye Smith:

Thank you for your correspondence of October 28, 2011, and January 6, 2012, regarding Infectious Salmon Anaemia virus (ISAv) and aquaculture in British Columbia. I regret the delay in responding.

Further to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO's) response of July 29, 2011, regarding your concerns about aquaculture, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that there are stringent federal regulations in place to protect Canada's aquatic species (farmed and wild) from disease. Full details are included in the attachment regarding preventing the spread of fish pathogens. These measures include fish health reporting. As well, DFO conducts regular random audits of fish farms for fish health, which include testing for viruses including ISAv.

I will provide an overview on these issues to help clarify recent reports. DFO and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have worked together over the past months to respond quickly to the test results that were reported to the media in October 2011.

ISAv is a member of a family of viruses known as orthomyxovirus, and can cause a disease known as Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA). It is important to note that there is a large difference between the presence of ISAv and the presence of the actual disease ISA. Initial unconfirmed positive results are termed "presumptive positives" and must be repeated by a reference laboratory using validated tests and testing methodologies before results are confirmed.

DFO's Gulf Fisheries Centre (GFC) in Moncton, New Brunswick, is the National Aquatic Animal Health Program (NAAHP) reference laboratory for ISAv. Under the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) terms of reference, a "reference laboratory" is designated to pursue all the scientific and technical problems relating to a named disease or specific topic, in this case, ISAv. The GFC laboratory uses a test that has been validated according to OIE criteria to ensure that the test correctly establishes animal disease status.

All test results that have been reported in the media as positive for ISA or ISAv were initial unconfirmed positives, including those of DFO scientist Dr. Kristi Miller. These samples were re-tested at the GFC reference laboratory and were not confirmed. Further information is available in the DFO/CFIA press release at < [www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/news-releases/infectious-salmon-anaemia/eng/1323652434998/1323652434999](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/news-releases/infectious-salmon-anaemia/eng/1323652434998/1323652434999) >.

During the Cohen Commission hearings on ISA in December, these findings were discussed by a panel of experts. Cohen testimony brought forward some important points on the current state of knowledge surrounding ISAv in British Columbia:

- \* All witnesses agreed that the ISA disease has not been found in British Columbia waters;
- \* ISAv has not been confirmed to date in wild Pacific salmon;

\* The results of testing by all labs participating in the Cohen Commission hearings indicate that whatever is causing presumptive positive results in certain tests is not a known strain of ISA v; and

\* Further sampling, testing and research are required before a definitive conclusion on whether or not ISA v or another orthomyxovirus exists in British Columbia waters and, if so, whether or not it causes disease.

The Department will continue to work with CFIA and other partners, such as the Province of British Columbia, on the investigation into this matter. In 2012, DFO and CFIA are planning to:

1. Finalize a NAAHP surveillance plan for British Columbia that will incorporate additional screening of wild and farmed salmonids for viral pathogens, including ISA v; and
2. Research the inconclusive presumptive positive results that may represent a variant or divergent strain of ISA v or another orthomyxovirus.

Also noted in past correspondence, the Pacific Aquaculture Regulations licence conditions outline the measures that aquaculture operations must take to minimize the escape of fish from the aquaculture facility and to catch the fish that escape from an aquaculture facility. If you would like further details about this matter, conditions of licence are outlined on DFO's website at < <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/licence-permis/docs/licence-cond-permis-mar-eng.pdf> >. I have also attached additional information regarding closed-containment aquaculture.

I hope this information helps to address your concerns about the current information available on the possibility of ISA v in British Columbia waters.

Yours sincerely,

Original Signed by

Keith Ashfield

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Attachments (2)

c.c: The Honourable Gerry Ritz, P.C., M.P.