



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Mark Ruskell MSP
Office MG.17
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Wednesday 13th December 2017

Fergus Ewing
Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity
By Email

Dear Cabinet Secretary

I am writing to follow up on written questions I lodged in November 2016 in relation to biosecurity concerns around the transportation of salmon morts from Scotland's fish farms (S5W-04594, S5W-04998). In response to one of these questions, you replied;

“Vehicles used for transporting **salmon** morts to a disposal site must be approved or registered under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (ABPR). The operators of these vehicles must ensure that **salmon** morts be collected and transported in sealed new packaging or covered leak-proof containers. Transporters approved or registered under the ABPR are inspected on a risk-based basis by the Animal and Plant Health Agency and any issues would be an enforcement matter for local authorities. Information on the number of journeys made from farm to final disposal in each of the last three years is not held centrally.”

As you may be aware, reports on BBC1's The One Show this week (Monday 11th and Tuesday 12th December) focused on mortalities in the Scottish salmon industry and included footage of salmon morts being transported over 300 miles from Loch Kishorn in Wester Ross to a processing plant in Dumfries and Galloway. Four lorries were showing storing the morts overnight at the roadside, whilst at times there was liquid clearly seeping from the transport containers onto public roads.

I am writing to ask if the Animal and Plant Health Agency will be investigating this incident as a breach of the ABPR, and will the Scottish Government provide support to the affected local authorities to take any enforcement action required?

I would also like to ask if the Scottish Government intends to collate and publish information on the number of journeys made from farm to final disposal, what steps can be taken to reduce the distances travelled, and how Scotland's salmon farm operators can take action to reduce the number of mortalities on their farms?

With the recently published Scottish Fish Farm Production Survey 2016 showing mortality rates of 26.7% in Scotland's fish farms, rising to 42.8% in the Western Isles, I am sure you can agree that we are facing a crisis in our fish farms which threatens animal welfare, productivity, our coastal environment, and the integrity of Scotland's seafood exports. I urge you to take urgent steps to address this crisis, beginning with the issue of the transportation and disposal of salmon morts.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Ruskell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Ruskell MSP