



Don Staniford
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Our Reference: 202000084423

24 September 2020

Dear Mr Staniford

Thank you for your letter of 28 August 2020 to Cabinet Secretaries Mr Ewing and Ms Cunningham, and the concerns you raise. I have been asked to respond.

The Scottish Government takes the issue of escapes very seriously and an investigation by the Fish Health Inspectorate is underway with the cooperation of Mowi Scotland into the cause of the recent escape on the West Coast.

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007 Part 1, Section 5 provides powers for inspectors to assess the measures in place for the recovery of escaped fish. Enforcement action as set out in the Fish Health Inspectorate Service Charter (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/fish-health-inspectorate-service-charter/>) can be taken where Scottish Ministers are satisfied that satisfactory measures are not in place.

The potential for escapees to interbreed with native salmon is a concern, and Marine Scotland are working with Fisheries Management Scotland and MOWI regarding monitoring to assess whether there is evidence of introgression likely to be associated with this escape.

It may be of interest to know that there is guidance available on the capture and identification of farmed fish caught in rivers via the [Marine Scotland webpage](#) and [Fisheries Management Scotland](#). There is no legal requirement for anglers to notify the Scottish Government, but if a fish is clearly identified as of a farmed origin the fish should be humanely dispatched. The Marine Scotland Fish Health Inspectorate should be contacted to alert them to the capture of the escaped farmed fish

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We are clear that the containment of farmed fish in Scotland is of crucial importance in minimising the potential impact of aquaculture on the aquatic environment. We are reviewing controls on the containment of farmed fish in Scotland through improvements to the Technical Standard for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture. Working with the sector, we are updating the Technical Standard, including enforcement options and mandatory sector training, in order to further improve containment at Scottish fish farm sites.

We are currently considering the Salmon Interactions Working Group's Report, published in May 2020, including recommendations on tightening the regulation around escapes. In addition, a Regulator's Technical Working Group, working in parallel with the Salmon Interactions Working Group, has been tasked with developing a practical framework for assessing the level of risk posed to wild salmonids. The framework will take account of the best available science and the precautionary principle, and it is intended that it will underpin future planning advice.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Johnston
ARF : Aquaculture Unit

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