

[Fatty Farmed Salmon Causes Stink in Scotland](#)

- FOI reveals 'Seriously Non-Compliant' effluent, "illegal discharge" of grease, fish scales & guts, "pools of blood" and "odour issues" at processing plant

**Ullapool, Scotland** - A farmed salmon processing plant operated by Wester Ross Fisheries is [named and shamed](#) as a source of a decade of environmental pollution, illegal discharges and 'seriously non-complaint' operations. FOI requests were prompted by a whistleblower and former employee at Wester Ross Fisheries who testified to sea lice infestations at the farmed salmon processing plant in Dingwall, Ross-shire.

Read exclusively in The Ross-shire Journal [online here](#)



Read all the documents obtained via Freedom of Information from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Water and Highland Council online via "[FOI Dossier on Wester Ross Fisheries Processing Plant in Dingwall](#)" (24 March 2014)

The damning revelations come in the wake of a [recent scientific study](#) highlighting processing plants as a source of the spread of infectious diseases and further evidence of sea lice problems at salmon farms in Wester Ross. Yet both the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Water admit that neither agency conducts monitoring. Earlier this month Protect Wild Scotland [called on Scottish Water, SEPA and Highland Council](#) to convene a task force to tackle the threats posed by the spread of sea lice and infectious diseases via processing plant effluent.

FOI documents from SEPA, Scottish Water and Highland Council [reveal](#):

- Discharge data from 2005 to 2014 recorded 129 "parameter failures" including 58 "serious parameter failures" (a 17.25% failure rate) - including an 80% failure rate for 'free oil and grease' leading to an overall assessment in February 2014 of "Seriously Non-Compliant".

- Wester Ross Fisheries have received repeated warning letters from Scottish Water for "parameter failure" and "serious parameter failure" relating to "illegal discharge" of effluent. Scottish Water have issued repeated "Notification of Non-Compliance" and "Notification of Serious Non-Compliance" letters for breaches of total suspended solids, biological oxygen demand and solvent extractable material (fats oils & greases).

- Minutes of a meeting in May 2012 between Scottish Water and Wester Ross Fisheries reported that the Waste Water Treatment Plant at Dingwall "was still reporting fish scales entering the works on a regular basis".

- In 2011, SEPA reported that "odour issues" had been "ongoing for 6-8 years" with lorries "leaching contaminated water" which is "entering the drains and then running untreated into the River Peffrey".



- Highland Council wrote to Wester Ross Fisheries in 2011, 2010 and 2009 reporting "contraventions" of the Food Safety Act 1990 and Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 1996. One contravention in 2010 stated that: "the vacuum packs stored uncovered in the box store are open to contamination by condensation falling from the metal roof".

- In 2010, Scottish Water wrote to Wester Ross Fisheries stating that they were "greatly concerned about the large quantities of fish scales appearing at the Dingwall Wastewater Treatment Plant". According to Scottish Water, the fish scales from the farmed salmon processing plant were "choking the inlet screens".

- In 2010, SEPA recorded an 'Environmental Event Report' following a complaint regarding "oil in gully pot" and an inspection which found "pools of blood on the road".

- In 2009, SEPA recorded an 'Environmental Event Report' following a complaint detailing "fish waste discharged into River Peffery". SEPA found "evidence of fish waste in the river" with "scales and fish guts evident from the surface water drain downstream" and "evidence of sewage fungus growing within the river".

- Wester Ross Fisheries told Scottish Water in 2008 that they "are encountering problems with our plan to install fat trap" and "will have to look at a much bigger trap".

- In 2006, Scottish Water reported "a large amount of fish fins/parts of tails" entering the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Dingwall. In 2005, minutes of a meeting between Scottish Water and Wester Ross Salmon reported "high fat recordings".

Read dossier in full [online here](#)

"I am not at all surprised that Wester Ross Fisheries has been 'seriously non-compliant' for over a decade," said John Craig, a former employee of Wester Ross Fisheries. "When I worked at the processing plant in 2002 the parasite problems were truly shocking and we spent most of our time scraping sea lice off the farmed salmon. Judging by the latest sea lice reports from the SSPO it seems the problem is now even worse. The company ethos is sadly one of doing things as cheaply as possible, narrowly avoiding prosecution."



"SEPA and Scottish Water have given Wester Ross Fisheries free reign to pollute with impunity and are partly to blame," continued Craig. "The litany of abuse revealed via Freedom of Information is a damning indictment of a company which operates with utterly blatant contempt for the environment and public health. Working in a processing plant has given me an unique insight into how salmon are farmed and prepared before heading to the supermarket - and I'd certainly not recommend eating farmed salmon even for my dogs."

"Fatty farmed salmon leaves is causing a stench across Scotland," said Don Staniford, Director of the [Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#). "Discharging disease-ridden farmed salmon effluent from processing plants and salmon farms is a recipe for ecological disaster. Scotland's disease-ridden salmon farming industry is quite literally going down the drain. [Recently published scientific research](#) warns that the effluent from farmed salmon processing plants is a disease time-bomb. This new FOI data exposes the stomach-churning

operations of Wester Ross Fisheries who are guilty of a decade of 'Seriously Non-Compliant' operations and 'illegal discharge'. Shame on Wester Ross Fisheries for spreading contaminated water, fish scales, sewerage fungus, fish guts, fats, oils, grease as well as leaving a bad smell. Consumers of farmed salmon should take a visit to Dingwall and see how filthy this rotten industry is - but don't forget the nose-clips and a sick bag!"

"If the physical environment (temp, salt, oxygen etc) is within the rather broad tolerance bounds of lice, survival at least over the short term (weeks eggs /days for lice) is assured," said Dr. John Volpe from the University of Victoria in British Columbia, a co-author of '[Fish Processing Facilities: New Challenge to Marine Biosecurity in Canada](#)' published in the December 2013 issue of the Journal of Aquatic Animal Health. "Our scientific study certainly raises a red flag concerning processing plant wastes and the transfer of diseases and parasites. The sensible solution is to avoid discharges into waterways where wild salmonids are present - and that means Scotland as well as Canada."

"In view of the recent scientific concerns raised in Canada, Protect Wild Scotland urges SEPA, Scottish Water and local authorities across Scotland to convene a task force to tackle the threats of the spread of sea lice and infectious diseases via processing plant effluent," wrote Protect Wild Scotland in a [letter \(7 March 2014\) to Scottish Water, SEPA, Highland Council and other agencies](#). "Please help protect wild salmonids from the threats posed by processing plants discharging diseased wastes into Scotland's waterways. It beggars belief that no public agency appears to be monitoring for sea lice and infectious diseases in processing plant effluent."

"Scottish Water and SEPA must now stem the toxic tide of water pollution, illegal effluents and infectious diseases being discharged by Wester Ross Fisheries," continued Staniford. "In view of the [new scientific evidence](#) showing how processing plant effluents can spread disease and sea lice, there must surely be an immediate halt to discharges. Until monitoring can prove that the effluent is safe then Wester Ross Fisheries should suspend operations."

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High resolution photos of the processing plant are available upon request

**Notes to Editors:**

[1] Read all the documents obtained from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Water and Highland Council online via "[FOI Dossier on Wester Ross Fisheries Processing Plant in Dingwall](#)" (24 March 2014)

[2] Read more about a decade of pollution at salmon farms operated by Wester Ross Fisheries via "["Unsatisfactory" Wester Ross Salmon – A Decade of Pollution!](#)" (Protect Wild Scotland, October 2013)