

Farmed salmon fail organic test

BY CHRIS GENOVALI, TIMES COLONIST JULY 25, 2010

Re: "Farmed B.C. salmon could carry organic label under federal plan," July 15.

The proposal by the Canadian General Standards Board and the organic aquaculture working group at Fisheries and Oceans Canada to give the "organic stamp of approval" to B.C. farmed salmon raised in open-net pens is nothing short of Orwellian.

Among many practices that should be considered antithetical to the spirit and intent of organic certification, the B.C. fish farm industry relies on the application of the agricultural drug Slice to address chronic sea lice outbreaks.

Emamectin benzoate is the active ingredient in Slice, which is administered in feed. The use of Slice is a concern to scientists like David Carpenter, professor at the environmental health and toxicology division at the University of Albany in New York. Carpenter has said that "emamectin is one of a class of drugs known to block a major inhibitory neural transmitter in the brain. Animal studies have demonstrated exposure to this chemical during development causes changes in behaviour and growth as well as pathological changes in the brain."

Little is known about the long-term impact of Slice on other aquatic life. Mounting evidence indicates that Slice may negatively affect crustaceans. Canadian scientist Les Burridge, who works in the field of ecotoxicology, has written that "chemicals used to control infestations of sea lice on cultured salmon have a potential for impacting non-target organisms, particularly other crustacea. Investigations have been conducted on lethal impacts but observations made during these experiments indicate potential for ecologically important sub-lethal impacts."

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