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Federal Investigation into Infectious Salmon Anaemia Virus in British Columbia Salmon

October 24, 2011

The recent reports stating that ISA has been found in British Columbia salmon have not yet been verified by federal officials through established processes. After initial investigations, we are concerned that proper protocols may not have been followed in the testing and reporting of these findings. CFIA and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are working to assess the results through scientifically sound and internationally recognized procedures, which must include additional testing to verify the presence or absence of ISA virus in these samples.

We want to assure Canadians and people around the world that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are working diligently to get the facts about the reports of the presence of Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) in British Columbian salmon.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducts regular testing in British Columbia for a wide variety of pathogens, including ISA. Over the past 2 years, over 500 wild and farmed salmon in British Columbia have been tested by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. From 2003 to 2010, the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture operated a scientifically designed surveillance program that tested over 4,700 farmed salmon in BC. Again, all samples were negative for the virus. In short, there has never been a confirmed case of ISA in British Columbia salmon – farmed or wild.

The CFIA and Fisheries and Oceans Canada have been able to acquire additional tissue samples from the 48 sample fish. The national ISA reference laboratory in Moncton will analyze these samples. These tests could take up to 4 or 5 weeks to complete.

There are stringent federal regulations in place to protect Canada's aquatic species (farmed and wild) from disease. The protection of Canada's natural resources continues to be a top priority of the Government of Canada.

Until such time as this testing is finalized, it is important that Canadians and others reserve judgment and let the appropriate scientific process run its course. Public debate and any forward action on this issue must be based on the best science.

The Honourable Keith Ashfield
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The Honourable Gerry Ritz
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Date Modified: 2011-10-24