

CFIA Confirms a New Case of ISA at Aquaculture Site

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmation of the Infectious Salmon Anemia virus at an aquaculture site on the south coast is being monitored closely by the Provincial Government. The presence of the virus has activated federal and provincial protocols and procedures that aim to limit the spread of the virus. The Provincial Government and officials from the Centre for Aquaculture Health and Development in St. Alban's will continue to provide support to the CFIA throughout the process.

"The CFIA has confirmed the presence of the Infectious Salmon Anemia virus at an aquaculture site on the south coast of Newfoundland and Labrador," said the Honourable Derrick Dalley, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. "While ISA is not harmful to humans, if not managed properly it could cause further risk to other fish farms in the region. Thus far, there is no sign of the virus spreading. However, in all cases where aquatic diseases are suspected or confirmed, the goal is to minimize exposure to infection and disruption to producers, while respecting obligations to take appropriate and prudent precautionary control measures. For that reason, CFIA had previously quarantined the infected site and our government will continue to provide any and all necessary support as the situation evolves and a depopulation order for the infected fish is issued."

Preliminary laboratory results tested positive for Infectious Salmon Anemia virus on Monday, November 26. The Provincial Government immediately notified CFIA per federal policy. The following day (Tuesday, November 27), CFIA placed the site under quarantine as a precautionary measure to restrict movement of people, fish, vessels, equipment and other potentially infectious material, to prevent the spread of the suspected virus. The Provincial Government was notified of confirmed test results by CFIA last evening (Monday, December 17). Strict biosecurity protocols remain in place at the infected site.

"Infectious Salmon Anemia is a virus that occurs naturally in the wild and has been observed in many fish farming jurisdictions around the world," said Dr. Daryl Whelan, Director of Aquatic Animal Health with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. "The Provincial Government, through the Centre for Aquaculture Health and Development, provides veterinary advice, support, facilities and quarantine assistance in such cases. The virus is a normal risk associated with fish farming. Our veterinarians and technicians perform regular testing and it is through such a proactive testing regime again that this second occurrence of ISAv in recent months was found. Analysis we have conducted to date does not point to this new case of ISAv being related to the first presence of the virus last summer. We will continue to work with the CFIA and the company to effectively deal with the impending order to destroy the infected fish."

Under the Federal Health of Animals Act, CFIA is solely responsible for reportable disease cases found in Canada, of which ISAv is one. Under the Act, CFIA can issue a depopulation order when a new disease is identified, and provide support to assist with compensation to cover the loss and costs of destruction and clean-up of the infected sites.

As a proactive measure, the company which owns the infected farm had submitted quarantine Standard Operating Procedures to CFIA, and the Provincial Government has provided various operating procedures and assisted with revisions related to disinfection, harvest, destruction and movement of the fish in the event a destruction order was issued. A decision on next steps is anticipated to come from the CFIA in short order. Further updates will be provided by the Provincial Government at that time.

“The Provincial Government recognizes the importance of this industry and continues to uphold high standards for production and processing in cooperation with all stakeholders,” said Minister Dalley. “Our government is committed to supporting the development of an aquaculture industry that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. While we continue to address the second occurrence of ISA in our province, it is business as usual, and fish farms continue to produce high quality product for the global seafood market.”

The aquaculture industry throughout Newfoundland and Labrador consists of 133 aquaculture sites which provide essential employment for those living in many coastal and remote rural communities. In 2011, the total market value of aquaculture production was \$120 million.

Media contact:

Bradley Power
Director of Communications
Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
709-729-3733, 699-5707
bradleypower@gov.nl.ca

BACKGROUNDER

Infectious Salmon Anaemia

What is Infectious salmon anaemia?

Infectious salmon anemia or anaemia (ISA) is a viral disease of Atlantic salmon that affects fish farms in Canada, Norway, Scotland and Chile. The virus, while potentially harmful to the fish, is safe for human consumption.

Who is the lead agency and what is the role of the Provincial Government?

Under the Federal Health of Animals Act, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is solely responsible for suspected reportable disease cases found in Canada. The Provincial Government's Aquatic Animal Health Division provides veterinary advice, support, facilities and quarantine support to the Federal Government.

What steps will be taken to prevent the spread of ISAv and alleviate risk?

Upon detection and confirmation of ISAv positive cages, the cages or the entire site is depopulated. If the site is depopulated, then a fallow period (period of time for the site to cleanse itself) will be prescribed. All salmonid marine cage sites are utilizing biosecurity protocols to minimize spread, consisting of controls for personnel, equipment and vessel movements, including cleaning and disinfection.

What protocols and policies are in place to limit exposure to ISAv?

The companies have site-specific biosecurity plans and the Provincial Government audits sites for status of those protocols. The Provincial Government conducts aquatic animal health surveillance on all marine cage sites. All transfers of cultured aquatic animals undergo a permitting process to ensure appropriate protocols are followed. Site specific Standard Operating Procedures are utilized by the companies, CFIA and the Provincial Government to mitigate the risk of spread of the virus from a positive site, which entails detailed movement controls and cleaning and disinfection procedures.

What are the risks associated with ISAv to humans?

There is no risk associated with ISAv to humans. The fish are safe for human consumption.

If an animal is indeed infected, can it be consumed?

ISAv infected fish are safe to eat.

How has industry mitigated against any potential risk?

There is strict adherence by the industry to good husbandry, best practices on each site.

How has government mitigated any potential risk?

The Provincial Government has four veterinarians and technical staff and has the most modern fish health diagnostic facility in Canada, located in St. Alban's. The Provincial Government fish health program has been independently assessed as the best in the country.

What role do the various levels of government play?

Both the CFIA and the Provincial Government have complementary roles in the diagnosis of fish pathogens. CFIA is responsible for new diseases as well as reportable and notifiable diseases under the Health of Animals Act. The province is the first responder, where a new pathogen is detected. It then advises CFIA immediately because it then is the primary authority under the Health of Animals Act.

What is CFIA's role in monitoring and public announcement?

CFIA will only make an announcement on confirmed diagnosis or in response to public inquiries where misinformation is being circulated.

Have there been any other diseases associated with aquaculture in the past in Newfoundland and Labrador?

There are numerous local, naturally occurring diseases in the wild. The first occurrence of ISAv in Newfoundland and Labrador was in 2012, on the south coast of the island portion of the province.

How would a fish contract a disease such as ISAv?

The virus would have to be present in the environment, or introduced. The exact source of the pathogen is under investigation in this case, but most likely is naturally occurring.

2012 12 18 2:45 p.m.