



59 Camelot Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0Y9

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Alexandra Morton

gorbuscha@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Alexandra Morton:

I am writing in response to your correspondence to Dr. Nathalie Bruneau, regarding the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA)'s response to potential evidence regarding Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) virus.

With regard to your concerns on the CFIA's follow-up after receiving test results from an OIE reference laboratory for ISA virus in BC farmed salmon that you bought in T&T markets and Vedder River female chum salmon, please note that the National Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory System (NAAHLS) could not corroborate the results obtained from the OIE reference laboratory. These samples tested negative at the NAAHLS, the official regulatory aquatic laboratory system of the Government of Canada. To be noted, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the ISA virus must be isolated and identified before ISA can be confirmed. Given the way the original samples were preserved (samples in RNALater), the virus isolation was not possible.

Furthermore, there are added concerns about the lack of quality of the samples tested and the lack of a proper chain of custody related to these samples as some of those were collected at a supermarket.

The best way to obtain a high quality specimen for testing is to collect fish live, moribund or as fresh mortalities. To be noted, storage conditions may also affect the quality of a sample. For instance, fish can be frozen but tissue and virus degradation occurs during multiple freeze/thaw cycles, storage in household freezers, etc. Other factors that affect the quality of a sample include transportation conditions (e.g. shipment methods) and cross contamination.

With respect to the chain of custody, please let me clarify that samples must be accounted for and secured at all times. Possession must be traceable and documented from the time the samples are collected until they or their derived data is used for testing. More specifically, the continuity of possession must be established to demonstrate that the samples are truly what they purport to be and have been handled in such a way that they have been kept free from contamination. It must be demonstrated that what the analyst examined is the sample collected and is in the same condition as when it was collected.

For these reasons, the CFIA concluded that there was not enough reasonable suspicion of a disease to be further investigated. As you know, the CFIA has developed a surveillance initiative for anadromous salmonids in B.C. The goal of this initiative is to effectively and efficiently determine the status of three diseases of significance in anadromous populations of salmonids in BC: ISAV, Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis Virus (IPNV) and Infectious Haematopoietic Necrosis Virus (IHNV). The objectives of the surveillance initiative are to provide information on the health status of salmonids for the protection of aquatic resources.

I trust that this information will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Cornelius (Con) Kiley
Acting Director
Aquatic Animal Health Division
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Government of Canada
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca>
59 Camelot Drive, Room 233 W
Ottawa, ON K1A 0Y9
Phone: (613) 773-7028
E-mail: Cornelius.Kiley@inspection.gc.ca