

## **PRESS RELEASE - King Salmon Biosecurity found wanting by MPI**

A much delayed Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) report on the severe 2015 mortality events in King Salmon's Marlborough Sounds farms has finally been made public. It is a disturbing read according to Andrew Caddie Vice president of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association.

### **Biosecurity Measures below par**

The report details an independent technical advisory groups finding that King Salmon's biosecurity was well below par, including;

- the King Salmon Biosecurity Management Plan was inadequate- being vague, lacking detail as to prescribed actions and thus potentially difficult to implement;
- the Biosecurity Plan was inconsistently applied by King Salmon with several potential breaches noted;
- there was a low awareness of biosecurity risks among King Salmon management; and
- the King Salmon production cycle was inconsistent with international best practice for the prevention of disease.

### **Casual response by King Salmon to Risks**

A possible causative pathogen behind the significant mortalities was isolated as a Rickettsia like organism (NZ- RLO) and found in several of the Marlborough King Salmon farms.

Part of the MPI response to the detection of the RLO (a flagged organism under the Biosecurity Act) in New Zealand involved the issue of no less than five official Notices or Directions to King Salmon by MPI over the period October 2015 to November 2016.

This flurry of paper from MPI was due in part to the seemingly casual reaction of King Salmon to the seriousness of the mortality event. For example, King Salmon routinely processes salmon farm mortalities (referred to as "morts") into berley (fish bait).

Not unexpectedly MPI had by May 2015 identified the use of salmon morts in the production of berley as a risk pathway. However MPI was clearly somewhat surprised to realize in 2016 that KS had made its own risk assessment and on that basis was continuing to distribute this high-risk product to the North Island.

Cue an urgent Notice of Direction under the Biosecurity Act from MPI in July 2016 to KS to immediately cease the distribution of bait and berley products!

### **High Water Temperatures a likely factor**

“The Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents’ Association has, since 2012, expressed its real concerns over the reasons behind these ongoing significant mortalities at KS Sounds farms. Given the difficulty of extracting information from MPI and KS we have turned to our own research and conclusions” says Andrew Caddie.

This research clearly shows that a major difficulty with farming salmon in the Sounds is high water temperatures. We feel vindicated to see that this MPI report now identifies the likes of “thermal stress” and “stocking density” as plausible scene setters for these previously unknown (to NZ) RLO pathogens to cause havoc.

The Association is disappointed that this report was not available in time for the hearings of the Advisory Panel receiving submissions on MPI’s proposal to massively expand salmon farming in the Sounds. However we are currently working through the report with MPI Biosecurity personnel and will be looking to keep the community informed of the dangers a diseased salmon population represents to our indigenous fish species and the well being of the Sounds generally.

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For further details or a copy of the MPI Report ( MPI Technical Paper No 2017/39)  
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