



APHIS

Aquaculture Industry Report

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United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Welcome!

Welcome to the premier issue of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Aquaculture Industry Report. Our primary goal in producing and distributing this report is to keep aquaculture producers informed of what APHIS is doing to support this growing industry. APHIS' mission is to promote the health of animal and plant resources, to facilitate their movement in the global marketplace, and to ensure abundant agricultural products and services for U.S. customers. This report will regularly highlight activities and developments throughout APHIS' broad base of services that address plant pests and weeds, wildlife depredation, fish biologics, and animal health certification.

We are currently working to expand our aquatic animal health activities to meet industry's need for increasing exports of aquacultural products around the world, for coordinating interstate regulation, and for protection from the accidental entry of animal pests and diseases. Providing services for the aquaculture industry in these areas is a new and exciting challenge for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout APHIS, we are fundamentally committed to meeting our customers' needs by being flexible and by using cooperative, team-based strategies for our programs. We encourage you to give us your opinion about APHIS' services for your industry. Please contact our national aquaculture coordinator, Dr. Otis Miller, to provide us with your feedback. You may reach him by telephone at (301) 734-7679 or via the Internet at omiller@aphis.usda.gov.

Sincerely,
Lonnie King
APHIS Administrator

The APHIS Aquaculture Team

A key group of technical advisers has joined efforts within APHIS to work together on issues currently of concern to the aquaculture industry, including aquatic health and exportability of U.S. aquacultural products.

The box at the bottom of this page lists the APHIS contacts at the national level.

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Joint Aquaculture Subcommittee

The Joint Aquaculture Subcommittee (JAS) requested that Federal agencies involved with the aquaculture industry formulate five major outcomes that they would like to see result from the National Aquaculture Development Plan (NADP). The NADP was originally designed by the JAS in 1983 and has not been updated since then to reflect developments in the private sector. A small working group representing government, industry, and the scientific community will develop the new plan for public presentation in Washington, DC, next fall.

On Sept. 15, 1995, APHIS representatives Althaea Langston and Richard Fite presented to the JAS the five following outcomes:

- Minimizing problems with interstate and international movement of aquatic animals, plants, and products of aquaculture, consistent with adequate protection of the environment and natural aquatic resources
- Increasing the coordination and harmonization of Federal agencies' services
- Increasing the use of regional aquaculture centers to solve practical aquatic animal health problems
- Reducing the duplication and overlap of Federal agencies' roles and responsibilities through better use of memoranda of understanding
- Increasing the coordination between USDA and USDI on responsibilities for export certification

Information about APHIS' plan to expand its services for the aquaculture industry was submitted to the JAS for consideration. APHIS also has requested to have representation on the JAS' working group for developing and rewriting the NADP.

European Aquatic Animal Health Guidelines

Since this summer, APHIS has been coordinating an interagency aquaculture working group in preparation for an Oct. 23-24 bilateral meeting on animal health sanitary issues with European Union (EU) representatives. Representatives from industry, NMFS, FWS, FDA, and APHIS held four conference calls and several meetings to plan a coordinated approach to negotiations with the Europeans about their new aquatic animal health directives. The working group transmitted a list of questions and issues in advance to the European delegation in preparation for the bilateral meetings. The list included a request for an overview of which EU aquaculture directives have been adopted in each member state and what additional legislation is anticipated. The working group also identified two specific EU directives (91/67/EEC and 95/352/EEC) as having definitions and requirements in need of further clarification for the U.S.

aquaculture industry. Dr. Andrea Morgan of Veterinary Services' National Center for Import and Export was designated as the USDA spokesperson for the bilaterals.

Aquaculture Export Certification Video

Plans are under way for APHIS to produce a video to illustrate health certification procedures for exporting aquacultural products. The video will focus on Washington State trout egg exports to Chile. The video will feature activities at Washington State trout farms, the Washington State Diagnostic Laboratory, and the Veterinary Services' Area Office in Olympia, WA. The goal of the video is to provide animal health and natural resources officials—as well as aquacultural producers—with a model to implement an aquatic health protocol for export purposes.

Wildlife Biologists Placed in the Southeast

APHIS' Animal Damage Control program hired three wildlife biologists last July, placing them in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi to assist aquaculture producers with bird depredation problems. These biologists are helping to develop new methods for controlling fish-eating birds, providing onsite assistance to aquacultural producers experiencing depredation problems, and developing management plans for fish-eating bird species in these three States.

Aquaculture Industry Overview

APHIS Veterinary Services' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) recently completed an overview of the U.S. aquaculture industry. Topics analyzed included trends in farm size, the geographic distribution of aquatic species, and a description of the industry's diversity. The overview also examined some of the Federal and State regulations that affect aquaculturists and highlights some domestic aquatic diseases that occur in the United States. This overview will be used as a starting point for a national aquatic animal health study of one component of the industry scheduled to be completed in 1997. The specific component has not been selected yet. Over the next few months, CEAH will focus on this single component of the aquaculture industry to more fully define its specific informational needs. The type of information collected about the component after its selection will be determined from discussions with industry representatives, academia, allied industries, and other governmental agencies.

Aquaculture Activities—State Highlights

Maine

Over the last 6 months, Federal, university, and State officials have been working together to develop new fish health guidelines for the State of Maine. Dissatisfied with similar salmonid guidelines currently used throughout New England, the committee will present the proposed guidelines to the State Departments of Marine Resources and Inland

Fish and Wildlife for consideration. To support these efforts, the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center has granted funding for the collection of data from marine and fresh-water wild and cultured fish stocks to use in designing a monitoring program for the guidelines. After sample information is collected and collated, Federal and State representatives will establish a scientific baseline for applying epidemiologically sound parameters to support the health guidelines.

Mississippi

Thanks to a major cormorant roost dispersal project last winter, aquaculture producers in the Mississippi Delta have experienced significantly reduced losses to bird depredation this year. During February 1994, only 13,898 cormorants were counted compared to 31,915 birds roosting in 1993.

Local catfish farmers and APHIS Animal Damage Control employees caused the cormorants to leave the region by consistently harassing their roost at night with pyrotechnics. This was part of a 2-year study of the effectiveness of pyrotechnics in dispersing cormorant roosts. If similar scare tactics work this winter, catfish producers will have an effective strategy for mitigating cormorant damage for the future.

Washington

The voluntary certification and inspection program for aquacultural products established by Veterinary Services in Washington State and Alaska in 1994 has endorsed export health certificates for a total of 42,760,000 salmonid hatching eggs through Oct. 1, 1995. The number of eggs shipped to Chile from May 1994 to October 1995 has totalled 42,605,000. Fish species currently being certified in the program are rainbow trout, Donaldson steelhead trout, Atlantic salmon, and coho salmon.

Aquatic Animal Health Issues

Importation of Taura Virus Analyzed

While developing an aquatic animal health plan, APHIS officials have been analyzing the role of imported aquacultural products in causing the Taura virus outbreak in Texas. Under the proposed legislation, APHIS' role in aquatic animal health would include regulation of the importation of any aquatic animal, plant, and aquacultural products (including water, sediment and transportation media) to prevent the introduction of diseases, pathogens, or pests detrimental to aquaculture. Once APHIS is authorized to address aquatic health trade issues, import regulations would be developed to prevent similar outbreaks from occurring in the United States.

Sea Lice in the Bay of Fundy

In the late summer of 1994, Canadian aquaculture producers in the Bay of Fundy, located between Canada and the State of Maine, began to experience a severe outbreak of sea lice. Warmer climatic conditions over the last 2 years are thought to be the major causal factor in the increased numbers of these parasites. Warmer average temperatures shorten the reproductive cycles of lice, and that in turn

increases their populations. Sea lice are parasitic arthropods that attach to the head and flesh of fish, causing external damage to the flesh that reduces marketability.

U.S. officials have been taking weekly lice counts on the American side of the bay over the last year for monitoring purposes. By midsummer of this year, the sea lice population had become a significant problem on the American side of the bay. The U.S. aquaculture industry in the area hired a veterinary representative to petition FDA for permission to use emergency bath treatments. FDA granted special approval for U.S. aquacultural producers in the area to use hydrogen peroxide or cypermethrin treatments under specified conditions. FDA delegated to APHIS the authority for approving a facility for storing the treatments safely. After an inspection by a Veterinary Services official, APHIS approved the facility. So far, the treatments appear to be successfully reducing the numbers of lice.

What's Ahead

The Western Regional Office of Veterinary Services and the Utah Department of Agriculture will be sponsoring an aquaculture meeting this winter for State and Federal regulatory officials, industry, and academia. This meeting is tentatively slated for February in Salt Lake City.

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