



Finlay Carson MSP  
Convenor Rural Affairs and Islands Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
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5 June 2024

Dear Finlay

Thank you for inviting the RSPCA to attend and give evidence at your session on 5 June on salmon farming. There was discussion around the different remits and operations of RSPCA and RSPCA Assured and I am happy to explain these.

The RSPCA is a charity that operates to reduce cruelty and promote kindness. Its inspectorate operational work is confined to England and Wales. The RSPCA sets and writes higher animal welfare standards for eight species of land and aquatic animals, including salmon and trout. These standards are open for any organisation or business to use worldwide. However, they are primarily used by RSPCA's farm assurance scheme - RSPCA Assured. The RSPCA obtains no income from RSPCA Assured. The RSPCA is run by a trustee body of 12 members and is governed by the Charity Commission.

RSPCA Assured is a separate charity and is a wholly owned company registered at Companies House. It was set up in 1994 to prevent cruelty to farmed animals and raise their standards through humane farming underpinned by a set of standards for farm animals and provide consumers with a higher welfare alternative to conventionally produced products. Some RSPCA Trustees are represented on the RSPCA Assured's Board.

RSPCA Assured charges their members (hatcheries, farms, hauliers and abattoirs) an annual membership fee. This covers their operational costs, including carrying out an assessment and, if they have met the RSPCA standards, certifying them. They also charge food manufacturers a license fee to use the RSPCA Assured label. RSPCA Assured receives no government or public funding.

Salmon farms that are members of the RSPCA Assured scheme are assessed regularly by a dedicated team of RSPCA Assured assessors to ensure all the animals are raised to the RSPCA's strict higher welfare standards. Assessments can be announced or unannounced. All complaints on a farm are taken extremely seriously and are thoroughly investigated by RSPCA Assured to validate any allegations that have been made. Any serious allegation of non compliance with the law are passed to the relevant statutory agency in Scotland for further investigation.

If a member is found to have breached the RSPCA welfare standards, RSPCA Assured membership agreement or other policies then a number of sanctions are available as appropriate. These range from



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informal advice, formal warning to temporary or permanent withdrawal of membership.

The RSPCA Assured scheme is accredited by UKAS. They also use SCI as an independent certification body who certify all RSPCA Assured farms, oversee all decision making in regards to awarding and removal of certificates, and provide support and advice as RSPCA Assured apply sanctions to members. Salmon farms can and have been suspended by the scheme if relevant standards are not followed and adhered to, and this has been the case with some salmon farms in the past.

If a non-compliance with the standards is identified, the member has the opportunity to rectify the issue within a given time scale (dependant on the nature of the issue). If the non-compliance is adequately addressed then membership can continue.

I hope this explains the clear delineation between RSPCA and RSPCA Assured but we are happy to answer any further questions the Committee may have.

Yours sincerely

David Bowles  
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