

Salmon farming in Scotland

Letter from Matthew Carse and Johanna Lindsay-MacDougall, 5 June 2024

We farm sheep and cattle at Barrackan, Ardfern Argyll.

Our fields stretch to the coast, 200M from MOWI's, at the time of its expansion, largest farm 'Bagh Dail Nan Can' - ironically or possibly appropriately - named after the adjacent 'Field of Heads' historically a place of much death and disease.

MOWI reported that in 2023 BDNC, along with the majority of the rest of their sites, suffered from consistently high levels of sea lice, significant weekly mortality and a wide range of disease :

- Anemia
- Pancreas disease
- Physical damage
- Heart and Skeletal Muscle Inflammation
- Cardiomyopathy Syndrome
- Gill Infections (repeatedly)
- Treatment Loss
- Bacterial infections
- Other bacterial infections (repeatedly)

Source : <https://mowi.com/uk/sustainability/lice-mortality-reporting/>

see sample report.

Any farmer would be extremely concerned to lose 5% of livestock in a single week. With fish farms this is a common occurrence.

Mowi Scotland Sea Lice and Mortality Reporting								MOWI®	
Report for w/e		22-Oct-23		updated 10-Nov 16:13					
Farm	Site Status	Adult female w/eggs	Adult female w/o eggs	Adult male	Mobile	Weekly Mortality (%)	Main cause of Mortality ¹	Treatments ²	
Ardintoul		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19			
Bagh Dail Nan Can		1.25	1.80	1.40	6.15	5.00	Treatment Loss		
Boisdale (An Camus)	Site fallow	-	-	-	-	-			
Cairidh	Site fallow	-	-	-	-	-			
Camas Glas		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.45	2.69	Gill Infections		
Caolas a Deas (Loch Shell)		1.70	1.00	0.40	2.20	5.73	Environmental	Taking place	
Carradale		-	-	-	-	-			
Colonsay		-	-	-	-	10.54	Treatment Loss		
Duich		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11			
Gorsten		0.05	0.35	1.15	7.85	1.54			
Greanem	Site fallow	-	-	-	-	-			
Greshornish	Site fallow	-	-	-	-	-			
Grey Horse Channel		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.75	Gill Infections		
Groatay		0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	4.76	Gill Infections		
Harport	Site fallow	-	-	-	-	-			
Hellisay		0.00	0.10	0.45	0.30	21.10	Gill Infections		

The salmon farming industry has in recent years celebrated record profits.

Whenever unusually large profits are seen they are due to what economists call an 'unaccounted externality'. In layman's language, if you're making that sort of money there's something you're not paying for.

In this case it is the damage to Scotland's environment, and the welfare of the salmon which is not being costed. Were it to be properly taken into account, profits would drop significantly.

High stocking densities and open sea pens facilitate the spread of parasites and disease in farmed salmon.

Uneaten feed and faeces pass directly into the marine environment causing local pollution and deterioration of coastal ecosystems.

When MOWI applied to increase the size of the site in 2019, we and other neighbours objected, predicting that in so doing there would be further environmental damage, and disease. This has proved to be correct, as MOWI's own reports show.

We would request the inquiry look into limiting the size of individual farms, and the total amount of tonnage farmed within a given area, Not only do they damage the environment, but also detract from the area as a tourist amenity.

I won't bother to go into detail about the washed up plastic piping, noise and light pollution, though it is depressing to look out on an otherwise unspoilt landscape on a still morning, and hear the low thump of the diesel generator used to power the fish feeders.

Matthew Carse
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