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PRESS RELEASE BY E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary, Save Our Seals Fund,
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The Scottish Government has been asked to do more to protect the public from potentially poisonous salmon which escape from factory fish farms. Since the beginning of 2016 over 328,000 Atlantic salmon have escaped from fish farms around Scotland. Many of these fish would have been bred from eggs imported from Norway and their release could have devastating consequences on our native wild salmon. A less well known risk is that posed by fish which escape after being treated with toxic chemicals or powerful medicines. Escaped farmed salmon are fairly easy to catch and could be dangerous if eaten. A Scottish Government website lists details of where and when fish escapes occur but does not give any information on whether the fish have recently been treated with toxic pesticides or given medicines such as antibiotics.

Campaigners have asked the Government to put this information on their website and to issue public warnings when potentially poisonous fish escape into the wild.

John Robins of Save Our Seals Fund states; "The latest report of 11,000 salmon escaping from a floating factory fish farm near Mull yet again highlights the risks these farms pose to our marine ecosystem. On checking the Government website which records these incidents I was shocked to learn that no indication is given on whether or not escaped fish carry a toxicity risk. If fish escape soon after being treated for sealice or illness they are not safe to eat. I've asked the Government to put this information on their website and to issue public warnings whenever potentially poisonous fish escape. I also want to know if any fish farmers have been prosecuted for letting intensively farmed fish escape into the wild."

EDITORS NOTES: More details in the e-mail and links below. Best number to get me on today (Saturday) is 07721605521.

From: JFRobins [mailto:john@jfrobins.force9.co.uk]

Sent: 16 September 2017 04:42

To: Roseanna Cunningham MSP (CabSecECCLR@gov.scot); Roseanna Cunningham MSP (scottish.ministers@gov.scot); Fergus Ewing MSP (cabsecrafe@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

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Subject: Mass escape of factory farmed salmon

FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary, Save Our Seals Fund, C/O Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel: 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521. Scottish Charity: No. SC025489
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Dear Cabinet Secretary Cunningham and Cabinet Secretary Ewing,

I write concerning the reported escape (see first link below) of over 11,000 salmon from a Scottish Salmon Company site at Geasgill, near the Isle of Ulva off the west coast of Mull. I understand the fish were yearlings weighing an average of 2.8kg and that the farm operators discovered the fish were missing on August 15 and informed Marine Scotland of the situation on August 21.

I see from the Aquaculture Scotland (I assume this is a department of Marine Scotland) website (see second link below) that the cause of the escape is unknown. The same website reports that the Scottish Salmon Company lost 300,000 salmon from another west coast site in June of last year.

Such escapes amount to environmental pollution by allowing inferior factory farmed fish (which may well have been produced from fertile eggs imported from Norway where they are obtained using brood stocks which have no connection with Scottish waters) into our marine eco system. Releases may also result in large numbers of sealice entering the wider environment.

This latest escape at Ulva coincides with autumn runs of wild salmon into our west coast river systems and could severely disrupt breeding success.

Can you tell me how many salmon farms have been prosecuted or otherwise penalised in the last ten years for allowing fish to escape?

On visiting the Scottish Government Aquaculture Scotland Fish Escapes website I noticed something which could have serious implications for human safety. The Fish Escape Details (which I assume are taken direct from the incident reports submitted by the offending fish farms) leave large gaps in information on the circumstances surrounding the escapes.

You are no doubt aware floating factory fish farms routinely have problems with mass sealice infestations. Salmon farmers use various methods to try and reduce sealice numbers. These include the use of some very powerful and potentially dangerous toxic chemicals.

As with all intensive livestock farming the keeping of fish in unnaturally high densities makes them susceptible to various diseases which require farmers to play pharmacist and administer medications to their livestock.

Often the escape of fish from fish farms is the result of human error during operations such as the administration of chemicals and medicines.

I can find nothing in your Fish Escape Details reports to indicate that the Scottish Government even asks salmon farmers to indicate whether escaped fish have recently been treated with toxic chemicals or pharmaceuticals. Escaped farmed fish can be very easy for anglers to catch and if potentially poisonous fish have been released into the environment the public should be warned of the risks.

I ask you to incorporate in future Fish Escape Details the details (dates and products) of when the fish were last dosed with chemicals or medications. In cases where escaped fish may still be carrying dangerous levels of chemical or pharmaceuticals public warnings should be issued to discourage people from eating toxic fish.

I look forward to your reply in due course.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Save Our Seals Fund

<https://stv.tv/news/west-central/1397856-more-than-11-000-salmon-escape-fish-farm-on-isle-of-mull/>

http://aquaculture.scotland.gov.uk/data/fish_escapes.aspx