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Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982.  
Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal  
Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.  
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To all Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Tuesday, 21 May 2019

Dear MSP,

If you haven't already done so I suggest you watch a short horror movie before your constituents start asking you questions about it.

For the next few days you'll find it on the BBC website via this link:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0005hc1?fbclid=IwAR0k-m6S52olwQBG3hMwGoAhIq\\_xruAXv7q3LU70ldWbGStrU3ceZDfV6bw](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0005hc1?fbclid=IwAR0k-m6S52olwQBG3hMwGoAhIq_xruAXv7q3LU70ldWbGStrU3ceZDfV6bw)

It is an excellent Panorama documentary titled Salmon Farming Exposed. It was broadcast last night. No doubt some in the industry will have a go at the BBC and claim this programme went over the top. That most definitely is not the case. In the last couple of years I have seen far more horrific footage taken at numerous salmon farms around Scotland. If anything the BBC very much underplay the situation, they did not exaggerate.

The programme makers not only expose the horrific cruelty and environmental damage inherent in these filthy floating factory fish farms they also expose the lax, inadequate and perhaps negligent way the Scottish Government, through Marine Scotland, has failed to properly police and regulate this largely foreign owned industry which has been damaging our marine environment for over 40 years.

A couple of years ago an enquiry under FOI revealed that staff from Marine Scotland were visiting salmon farms to collect sensitive environmental information because the salmon farm owners did not want to submit that information through the usual channels. Time and time again campaigners like myself have had to appeal to the FOI Commissioner to force Marine Scotland to part with information and photographs which show the reality of how salmon farming negatively impacts on our marine environment and native wildlife.

I once attended a Government meeting in Inverness where an “expert” on seals had been flown in from Australia to address people seeking Government Licenses to shoot seals. His advice boiled down to telling shooters to kill the seals when there’s no-one around and get rid of the bodies before anyone sees them.

If what is happening on salmon farms was happening on land-based livestock farms there would be uproar over the millions of rotting carcasses of sheep, cattle and pigs being transported hundreds of miles for disposal as toxic waste. Fergus Ewing would be out of a job and our courts would be full of farmers facing hefty sentences.

Three weeks ago I had to have a word with Co-op Food about their use of the word “sustainable” to describe salmon farmed in Scotland and used in their sandwiches. Within days the Co-op apologised for their “mistake” and promised to remove any references to sustainability from their salmon farmed in Scotland. Like most retailers they will now be referring to the salmon as “Responsibly sourced”, whatever the hell that means.

Many producers are also not being accurate when they describe their product as “Scottish salmon”. Most salmon produced in Scotland comes from fertile eggs imported from Norway and would more honestly be described as “salmon farmed in Scotland”. If the salmon eggs were kept in Norway and reared under the same conditions as they are in Scotland it is likely the Norwegian Government would prosecute the farm owners under environment protection laws.

Instead of routinely and wrongly referring to salmon farming as sustainable while pushing for a doubling in size of the industry, the Scottish Government should impose an immediate moratorium on the expansion of salmon farming in Scotland. The Government also needs to mount a full and independent investigation into the relationship Government Ministers, Government Departments and Government employees have had with salmon farms in Scotland over the last ten years.

I doubt if the Scottish Government is willing to do that. It is up to you and other Members of the Scottish Parliament to force the Government to address these issues.

The last time I wrote to you following a BBC documentary was to ask you to take action to stop the horrific trade in days old calves from Scotland to be finished and killed in mainland Europe. That vile trade continues via English instead of Scottish ports.

Can you do better to stop the enormous cruelty and environmental damage caused by salmon farmers exploiting our marine environment with the blessing, encouragement and collusion of the Scottish Government?

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
Animal Concern Advice Line