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Dear Sir/Madam

### **Viral Haemorrhagic Septicaemia confirmed in Ouse catchment**

The presence of Viral Haemorrhagic Septicaemia (VHS) was confirmed at a trout farm in North Yorkshire on the 26<sup>th</sup> May this year. VHS is a notifiable disease which affects mainly farmed rainbow trout, and can cause significant fish mortality.

Due to the serious nature of VHS, it is standard policy to place controls on entire river catchments on confirmation of the disease. Defra has issued an Order under the Diseases of Fish Act 1937, prohibiting movements of fish to and from the catchment of the River Ouse.

The fish on the affected farm have been slaughtered humanely and work has begun on disinfecting the site. Cefas has initiated an epidemiological investigation to establish whether there has been any spread of the virus beyond the affected farm and to attempt to identify the origin of the infection.

Due to this outbreak, the Great Britain (GB) approved zone for VHS has had to be suspended. This means that the trade in live fish to other VHS approved zones throughout the Community is also suspended. Imports of live fish and eggs into GB must still originate from VHS and IHN approved zones. Once the epidemiological investigation has identified the extent of the outbreak, the GB approved zone will be redefined to exclude the affected area, thereby enabling the unaffected parts of GB to resume trade. Once this has been done, consideration will be given to the action we will need to take to regain approved status for the affected zone.

Scientists from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Weymouth, are working closely with colleagues at Fisheries Research Services, Aberdeen, to ensure that all resources and scientific expertise can be brought to bear as necessary. I enclose a Cefas leaflet, outlining the effects of the disease, how to recognise it and where to get additional advice. I also enclose an information note, from Cefas, detailing the effect of VHS on wild populations and advice for anglers.

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