

CATEGORY 2 TECHNICAL REVIEW GROUP

Draft v1

Minutes of the Meeting 13 October 2006

Attendees:

Environment Agency

Adrian Taylor (AT), Policy Manager (chair)

Sarah Chare (SC), NFL Manager (sec)

Nigel Hewlett (NH), Senior Scientist

Chris Williams (CW), Scientist

Independent Advisors ("The Group")

Dr Ruth Kirk (RK), Parasitologist, Kingston University

Dr Jimmy Turnbull (JT), Epidemiologist, Stirling University

Dr Steve Feist (SF), Pathologist, Cefas (items 1-3 only)

Bernice Brewster (BB), Independent Practitioner, Aquatic Consultancy

1.0 Welcome

1.1 Introductions were made and AT welcomed the attendees to the first meeting of the group. AT set out how the Environment Agency are going to spend more time looking at the Novel and Category 2 parasites and diseases we control through Section 30. In the future fish movement policies will be based less on the precautionary principle and more on risk based science. This group has a key role to play in reviewing the science and advising the Environment Agency on policies and areas of further work.

1.2 As this was the first meeting of the group, AT requested feedback from the attendees on the balance of papers and information provided.

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 SC reminded the group that the Terms of Reference (ToR) had been previously circulated and comments received had been considered and amendments made. SC talked through the ToR section by section.

2.2 Section 1.0 No comments

Section 2.0 No comments

Section 3.0 SF noted that there was an emphasis on the NFL to be the people doing the work, when he felt that he could offer the ability to take up some of the work. SC said that the group was there to guide and advise on the work done by the NFL. SF said that he would look for opportunities to have a closer involvement in the work, which would

bring benefits to his understanding of the issues he is asked to comment on. SC said that links to Cefas (and to others in the group) were welcome and probable to get the required work done.

Section 4.0 No comments

Section 5.0 No comments

Section 6.0 SC envisaged a second meeting after 6 months followed by regular annual meetings. Group agreed.

Section 7.0 No comments

- 2.3 Overall: JT commented that the ToR should allow for the co-opting of new members onto the group if required. Group Agreed.

Action: SC to amend Section 5.0 of ToR to allow for further expertise to be co-opted onto the group as needed.

3.0 Cat 2 Project

- 3.1 Declarations of interest were made by JT, who is the PhD supervisor on a project that has been looking at certain parasites on the Category 2 parasite list. RK and SF also confirmed that they had contributed to the direction of this project.
- 3.2 CW gave a presentation on the project to date. Phase I included literature reviews, pathology and distribution studies for the Cat 2 parasites. Phase II of the project looked at how parasites could be prioritised for study and what criteria could be used to measure impact. Specific studies were done on *Paraergasilus longidigitus*, *Atractolytocestus huronensis*, *Ergasilus briani* and *Philometroides sanguinea* to improve current understanding. The technical summary of this work will be available shortly and a full draft of the PhD is due for completion by Christmas.
- 3.3 The group congratulated CW on the work he has done to date. The group debated what criteria and level of evidence would be required to advise on whether a parasite could come off the list, stay on the list without further study or stay on the list for further study. The general consensus was that both the methods and evidence for deciding this should be peer reviewed. This could be achieved through the successful defence of CW's PhD and ensuing papers. This should be backed up with information on the impact on industry of applying section 30 controls.
- 3.4 It was agreed that the group would meet again in early spring to consider the detail of the completed PhD. From this it was anticipated that the required advice on what should stay on the list, come off the list or be studied further could be provided by the group.
- 3.5 Along side this, a paper would be submitted to European Association of Fish Pathologists (EAFP) conference on impact assessment of exotic

parasites to freshwater fisheries and prioritisation methods. The *A.huronensis* papers should also proceed to publication. The NFL should start to plan the publication of papers from the PhD in support of any policy recommendations.

Action: **CW** to complete a full draft of the PhD by Christmas and circulate a copy in confidence to the group. **CW** to produce a paper for EAFF. **CW** and **RK** to complete papers on *A.huronensis*.

(SF left the meeting at this point)

4.0 Tench Rhabdovirus

4.1 CW gave a presentation on the background to TRv being found on Environment Agency Fish Farms in 2004 and of the subsequent broodstock-screening program. He highlighted that since the mortalities in fisheries in 1999, there have been no further mortalities in Fish farms or fisheries. In addition TRv antibodies have been found to be in a number of river catchments across England and Wales. The Environment Agency does not regulate the spread of this virus through Section 30, but do seek to avoid using TRv infected fish as broodstock on our own fish farms. The Environment Agency is concerned that we are paying for screening that may not be needed and unnecessarily limiting our broodstock collection sites. The group was asked to advise.

4.2 The group advised that the data should be considered at a catchment level and that any positive sites should over-rule a negative site on that basis. Further work should be done to calculate true prevalence and fish movement records should be looked at to model the likelihood of spread from those positive catchments. The outcome of this work would provide the group with the evidence needed to advise the Environment Agency on restricting our own movements due to the presence of TRv antibodies.

4.3 The group also noted that the impacts of stocking TRv naïve fish to potentially TRv endemic waters should be considered in decision making.

Action: **CW** to work with **JT** on calculating the true prevalence on TRv in coarse fish river catchments and using fish movement data, model the likelihood of spread.

5.0 KHv (KV-3) Vaccination

- 5.1 BB declared an interest in this item as Chair of the CFFTA. JT declared that the Environment Agency had approached Stirling with regard to processing serum samples for KHv antibodies.
- 5.2 NH outlined the background to the importation of vaccinated fish from Israel and the subsequent request to stock them into fisheries by a number of fish suppliers. He went through the risk assessment that we completed that determined the vaccinated fish did not pose a risk to native carp. The Group was provided with the evidence in the form of published papers, correspondence with Cefas and the Israeli government, and commercially confidential data provided by the vaccine developers.
- 5.2 From present knowledge, the group concluded that the vaccine poses a negligible risk to native carp stocks. The group also suggested that vaccines often have an important role to play in controlling epidemics and ensuring that the impact of any control measures do not outweighed the impact of the disease its self.
- 5.3 Some concern was expressed by the group as to whether the presence of antibodies in the vaccinated fish would make establishing the prevalence KHv in fisheries and fish farms more difficult. NH answered that Cefas had done work on antibody decline in the vaccinated fish, which suggested this was a temporary effect. The Environment Agency and Cefas keep fish farm and fishery movement records that (although not 100% accurate) would also help to mitigate against this.

6.0 KHv Outbreak 2006

- 6.1 BB declared an interest in this item as Chair of the CFFTA.
- 6.2 NH outlined this years KHv outbreaks in fisheries and the subsequent action that was taken by the Environment Agency though Section 30 controls. Of particular note were the high temperatures this summer and the fact that all but 1 of the affected fisheries were highly stocked intensively managed waters. The 1 exception was reported to be suffering from chronic water quality problems.
- 6.3 The group agreed that KHv is a very serious disease of carp that is of concern to everybody involved - the fisheries, the fish suppliers and the regulators. The group endorsed the Environment Agency's approach of contact tracing and using Section 30 controls until Defra take action after the disease is made notifiable.

- 6.4 The group thought it was important that the link between good fisheries management and low mortality on contracting KHv (incl. subsequent recovery of the fishery) is well understood by fishery owners and managers. Due to the scale of the outbreak this year and cases of KHv in the ornamental trade since the mid nineties, it is unlikely that England and Wales could ever be considered KHv free. Both fishery managers, through good practice and regulators' policies need to take account of this.
- 6.5 The group felt that key to determining what policies should be adopted longer-term lies with understanding the prevalence KHv in fisheries and the supply industry. If there is low prevalence a containment/ eradication policy could be adopted – this is unlikely. If there is a more widespread distribution that is well defined, zonation is another option. If the prevalence is widespread then the focus needs to shift to managing the impacts at a fishery level. This could include consideration of the use of vaccinated fish.
- 6.6 The group felt that determining prevalence was a job for Defra and should be carried out urgently. The group acknowledges that this was likely to be difficult and expensive. They felt that the antibody assay was the best route for achieving this. Again the concern was raised of how the stocking of vaccinated carp would interfere with prevalence results. As stated in Section 5, the Environment Agency could mitigate this through stocking records and our understanding of antibody decline in vaccinated fish.

7.0 AOB & DONM

- 7.1 AT asked for feedback from the group on the meeting, particularly the level of information provided to the group. The group was happy with the papers and background information/ data that were provided to them in advance of the meeting.
- 7.2 It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in early spring pending the completion of CW's PhD.

Action: SC to circulate dates for the next meeting after Christmas.