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## Viral Haemorrhagic Septicaemia (VHS) and Freshwater Fisheries

A Defra news release of 1 June 2006 reported an outbreak of VHS on a trout farm in North Yorkshire. Statutory controls were placed on the affected farm and all other fish farms in the Ouse catchment. In addition the Environment Agency has suspended all fish introduction and movement consent applications in the catchment whilst investigations into the extent of the disease outbreak are conducted.

VHS is a viral disease that affects fish. The most susceptible species is rainbow trout, widely farmed across the UK for human consumption and for restocking fishing waters. Other susceptible freshwater fish species include pike, grayling and brown trout. VHS is primarily a disease of farmed rainbow trout. Mortalities on farms can be high with up to 80% losses.

This is the first outbreak of VHS on mainland Great Britain.

### **VHS and wild fish**

There are a number of species of fish that are found in the wild or are stocked into fisheries in GB that are known to be susceptible to VHS. However whilst there is a risk of the transfer of VHS from farmed to wild freshwater fish and vice versa there have been no reports of VHS leading to significant outbreaks of disease in wild freshwater fish stocks, even in countries where the disease is widespread and has been present for many years. Therefore the risk to wild fish stocks and fisheries in GB is considered to be low.

### **VHS and Angling**

There is no reason to stop angling in the affected catchment or adjacent catchments so long as anglers take appropriate precautions to reduce the possibility of the further spread of the disease.

Whilst there are no reports of VHS having been spread through angling activities or via contaminated angling equipment this route of spread remains a possibility and anglers should ensure that their equipment is clean and dried, or disinfected between angling sessions. Please see the advice on disinfection of angling equipment on the [efishbusiness](http://efishbusiness.gov.uk) website.

As the affected fish farm was situated on the River Nidd it is recommended that angling on this river is avoided until the investigation on the health status of the stocks of wild fish in the river is completed.

VHS has no implications for human health