

KHV NEWS LETTER

KHV Notification and Control Arrangements

On 31 October 2006, Defra issued proposals for making Koi Herpesvirus (KHV) Disease notifiable and options for controlling outbreaks of the disease. The package consist of a covering letter explaining the need for action, a copy of the draft Order making the disease notifiable, a paper on the options for controlling the disease once the legislation is made and a partial regulatory impact assessment of the control options.

The consultation will end on 30 January 2007 and Defra hopes that as many interested parties as possible will use this opportunity to make their views know on this important matter. It would be particularly helpful if comment could be submitted to Defra well before the end of the consultation.

A copy of the consultation document may be accessed for the following web link

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/khv-control/index.htm>.

or by telephoning or e-mailing Marcus Brooks on 020 7904 8702 or Marcus.brooks@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Action during the consultation period

Defra has established a Steering Group on KHV to consider control arrangements for the disease in more detail. The group includes representatives from those most concerned to control the impact of KHV disease (importer, supplier/farmer and fishery owners). The group had its inaugural meeting in September and will meet again to consider comments received during the consultation.

During November three sub group meetings were held with representatives of the importer, supplier/farmer and fishery interests to draft guidance to help identify the risks to businesses from KHV disease and the means of mitigating them. The groups are aiming to produce easy to read documents for use by each of the three sectors, supported by more detailed guidance for those that need to know more. This work has received strong support from all sector participants in the groups. Good progress is being made and the aim of the groups is to produce guidance early in the New Year that will also be useful for dealing with other diseases that might emerge in the future.

Import of KHV susceptible species

Under current EU aquatic animal health certification arrangements no specific import requirements apply in respect of KHV disease (or vaccinated fish) although the certificates do require that live fish come from a source that has not experienced clinical disease outbreaks causing significant impact on stocks in the 6 month period prior to export to the EU. We have advised importers to check the source of their supply and to seek assurances in their commercial contracts that the fish are free of diseases of concern to them.

Vaccinated carp

There are risks associated with the import of vaccinated and unvaccinated carp because we remain in the process of establishing the scientific evidence in respect of the disease risks they pose. Even if the risks are assessed as low, they are risks that nonetheless exist. It is therefore for fishery operators themselves to decide whether the level of risk of stocking fish is acceptable to their business. In the case of vaccinated carp, that assessment should also take account of the fact that the vaccine used on live fish for export to the UK has no marketing authority for use in the UK or other parts of the EU and, as far as we know, no evaluation has been carried out by those engaged in this trade on the possible risks that imported vaccinated carp may pose to indigenous fish in UK environmental conditions.

Latency issue and research

The most important issue concerning this disease is the latent characteristics of the virus in the host, making it very difficult to confirm the presence/absence of the virus in apparently healthy fish suspected of being infected. Defra, has in recognition of the importance of the disease in terms of impacts on farmed and wild carp, funded research to improve diagnostic tests for the disease (worth £1.3m over the last 5 years) including the development of non-lethal antibody screening tests, use of which might mitigate the necessity of destroying valuable adult fish. Work scheduled under a current research project at Cefas, Weymouth aims to validate this antibody test to help eliminate cross reactivity, and increase sensitivity. Ring trials of the optimised KHV PCR diagnostic test developed at Cefas have been carried out at other national fish disease laboratories across the world this autumn.

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