

AD-HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING

on a new type of Sarcocystis-like parasite in rainbow trout at farms in continental Sweden

Summary

Date, location: 5 July 2013, B232, Rue Belliard 232, Brussels

Commission: Alf Fuessel; Pierangelo Bernorio; Iliyan Kostov;

Member States: Germany (Hinrich Snell), Sweden (Anders Hellstrom and Veronica Colmander), Denmark (Stig Møllergaard), UK (Ian Everett); Finland (Miia Jakava-Viljanen)

Norway: Tor Atle Mo

The Commission pointed out that the issue was discussed at Scofcah meeting on 2 July and the MSs agreed to set up ad hoc fish expert group to discuss these matters from the technical point of view and to report back to the MSs at the next meeting scheduled at 10 July 2013.

Sweden made a presentation of the recent situation in the country that can be summarised as follows:

First signs were found in 2011 in a smolt farm, in fry from imported fertilized, triploid eggs. Main symptoms were associated with the increased mortality, black tails, nervous inflammation, muscle necrosis and foreign bodies in the cells. The fish was treated with antibiotic but did not respond optimally. Samples were sent to the NRL for Bacterial and virus infection tests. Cells of protozoan appearance were detected by immunohistology Rb muscle (polyvalent ab sarcocystis serum from land animals). A transmission test was performed – agent showed to be infectious. The agent was also found downstream in brown trout. The mortality reported in this farm was 10-15%. Last week the disease was confirmed in the second farm but the mortality was less than 1%. The one more farm was placed under suspicion.

During the discussion it was made clear that with certainty the life cycle of the parasites (the all development stages are in the fish including the intermediate and final hosts) cannot be described. An e-microscopy was not used to define the characteristics of the agent.

The Commission representatives pointed out that, apart from one case, no serious effects can be observed in the other cases. The disease doesn't seem to cause serious effects in all populations that are infected. Adult fish could also be infected but the disease seems to appear clinically only in young fish. Symptoms and mortality seem to be affected by husbandry and hygienic conditions. Having in mind that the disease is not yet well characterised, at this time the trade restrictions are not justified from the scientific point of view, so it would not recommend to pose the trade restriction in this regard. If some Member States want to pose a ban on receiving live fish from Sweden, they should firstly conduct surveillance of the

presence of the parasite in their territory. For this occasion, the Commission would like to encourage the Member States, which have been receiving live fish from Sweden, to check in the records and look for clinical signs in the recent consignments arrived at the place of destination.

Sweden also informed of carrying out a risk assessment associated with the public health risks and the conclusion was that the risk is minimal for humans. It was also proposed that the EURL for fish diseases to provide the Commission and the National Referent laboratories of the Member States with more knowledge about this disease and try to support MSs' national laboratories in developing a rapid and easy to use diagnostic tool for detection of the disease.