

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com for more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics

Reprint from Volume 23 Number 23

November 17, 2011

Government tests for salmon virus come up negative

At a media conference on November 8, Dr Con Kiley, Director of National Aquatic Animal Health at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced that 'there is no evidence that ISA occurs in fish off the waters of British Columbia.'

The testing was ongoing since mid-October, when a laboratory at the Atlantic Veterinary College reported that it had detected the virus.

DFO says it tested all 48 samples, received as part of the original reports, for the virus and found all results negative.

DFO states that its results are consistent with the findings of an independent lab in Norway, which also tested samples associated with the investigation and provided a report to the CFIA. Under questioning by a journalist from the *Seattle Times* however, Dr Kiley then said that the Norwegian tests are 'inconclusive.'

The tissue quality of the 48 samples originally submitted for testing was 'sufficient' to allow CFIA's retesting, but when asked about the Canadian government's plan to share the samples with US research labs, Dr Kiley said that sharing the samples would be 'pointless' because the sample quality was 'partially or totally degraded'.

The CFIA and DFO are also looking at how the samples were collected, handled, transported and stored.

Incidentally, the non-profit BC Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences in Campbell River is upgrading its laboratory facilities. Equipment has been purchased and the lab has been upgraded to increase its diagnostic capacity for RT-PCR testing, the type of test used to look for the ISA virus, in BC.

Meanwhile, Dr Alexandra Morton and her team are sampling hundreds of wild salmon around BC. CFIA said that it has additional testing to do and the results will be provided when ready.

In Canada, infectious salmon anaemia is a 'federally reportable disease'. This means that all suspected or confirmed cases must be immediately reported to the CFIA. Under the CFIA's National Aquatic Animal Health Program, suspected federally reportable diseases must be confirmed at the DFO national reference laboratory.

The Cohen Commission plans to convene a two-day hearing in mid-December to put new information about the possible presence of the ISA virus in BC on the commission's record.

Infectious salmon anaemia poses no risk to people, but can be devastating for aquaculture operations. It is not yet fully understood how the virus could affect wild BC salmon.✉