

North-East Atlantic Commission

NEA(02)9

***Risks of Transmission of Gyrodactylus salaris (Gs)
in the North-East Atlantic Commission Area***

(tabled by the European Union)

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Finland

In Finland, advice has been provided to fishermen about the disinfection of the fishing gear and, in 2002 disinfection facilities will be available at all locations selling fishing licences. Disinfection is considered advisable, but it is not obligatory. In addition, in 2001, the Norwegian authorities started to require the disinfection of gear in the case of fishermen who come ashore in Norway even if they do not fish there. Monitoring of the possible occurrence of Gs has been organised in recent years in co-operation with the Norwegian authorities. The survey covers both common border rivers, the Rivers Teno and Näätämöjoki (Tana and Neidenelva). Monitoring of the parasite has been intensified also in some Baltic river systems that have headwaters close to those of the Atlantic rivers (Teno and Näätämöjoki).

Widespread education programmes have been started in recent years in order to improve the public awareness of Gs, its effects on Atlantic salmon stocks, and the measures required to prevent it spreading. These programmes have included distribution of information in different forms, e.g. roadside signs, video tapes, leaflets handed out in various places, e.g. together with issuing salmon fishing licenses etc. Commercial fish farming and transfers of fish from other catchments are strictly prohibited in the catchment areas of the Rivers Teno and Näätämöjoki.

Ireland

There have been no incidences of Gs recorded in Ireland. However, the Irish authorities are aware of the significant risks to stocks if Gs was to become established. A programme of education has been in operation since 1998 to inform the general public, fishermen, aquaculture producers and all other users of the freshwater environment to alert these user groups to the dangers of inadvertently introducing this organism into Ireland. The dangers highlighted include movement of anglers between regions with and without Gs and guidelines on disinfection of tackle and gear. Similar information has been developed for boat owners and users of other freshwater equipment who may be moving between EU regions. The educational material available includes, leaflets and posters, which were supported with information presented by technical experts from the Fisheries Board staff. An annual sampling programme is in place to investigate the incidence of Gs on juvenile salmon in rivers. The Irish Authorities are preparing a contingency plan for measures to take in the event of Gs being detected.

Sweden

Specific national legislation regarding aquaculture, introduction and transfer of fish was introduced during 1999 (FIFS 1999:10) in order to reduce the risk of spreading Gs.

Basic monitoring of the parasite has been going on in a few Atlantic salmon rivers during the last ten years. A more comprehensive monitoring programme was started in 2001, which also includes some sensitivity tests of different salmon populations. Sweden participates in regional cooperation with Finland, Russia and Norway to reduce infections with, and prevent the spread of Gs. All infected rainbow trout at a fish farm in Lake Bullaren were slaughtered and removed from the lake during April 2002.

United Kingdom

UK has taken the line that prevention of the introduction of Gs is a much better approach to control than attempting eradication. Safeguard measures have been agreed with the European Commission to prohibit the importation of all live salmonids except from areas also recognised as free from Gs. In addition, Codes of Practice, leaflets and posters have been produced to inform managers and anglers of the potential means by which Gs may be introduced, and the steps that may be taken to minimise these risks. It is recognised, however, that despite these measures, Gs may still be introduced, and contingency plans for containment/eradication have been prepared in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and are at various stages of consultation. Regular inspections by Fish Health Inspectorate staff of both aquaculture and wild salmon are designed to provide early evidence of the occurrence of Gs throughout the UK. To date, no Gs has been detected.

Codes of Practice

A “Code of Practice to Avoid the Introduction of *Gyrodactylus salaris* to GB” has been issued in Scotland and in England and Wales. Copies of this document are available from Fisheries Research Services in Scotland, and from the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs for England and Wales. Leaflets and posters are being prepared, updating similar material issued some years ago. These publications describe the parasite, and provide advice on the possible modes of transmission, and measures that the public can take to minimise the risk of introducing Gs if they have visited a country where the parasite is known to exist.

Contingency Plans

The Contingency Plans being prepared to cover all parts of the UK provide details of the following issues:

- The legal framework;
- Central decision making process;
- Roles of the various Agencies;
- Detection and diagnosis;
- Actions to be taken in the event of identification of Gs;
- Management strategies, including containment, eradication, enhancement of resistance;
- Communications/media/publicity.

Other EU Member States

Measures are under consideration in other Member States.