

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM MSD ANIMAL HEALTH

About MSD Animal Health

MSD Animal Health is the UK's largest supplier of pharmaceutical products and services to prevent, treat and control diseases across all major farm and companion animal species.

Situated within our Integrated Livestock Business Unit, our aquaculture team drive forward higher standards in farmed salmon and trout welfare and fish health management across the UK working with salmon producers in Scotland as well as ancillary bodies such as veterinary and feed companies who support the industry. Our support is primarily delivered through our broad portfolio of animal medicines including vaccines and parasite control.

The farmed salmon industry is currently managing a range of fish health and environmental challenges. Do you have any views on how these might be addressed?

Vaccines and medicines have had a positive impact on fish health and welfare and have dramatically reduced threats such as sea lice and infectious diseases. Licenced, well-regulated animal vaccines and medicines in addition to professional expertise help ensure that salmon remains a healthy, nutritious, affordable and economically important product which is exported across the globe.

The industry has already reduced its reliance on antibiotics, in so much as aquaculture has the lowest usage of antibiotics of any other food producing species. This reduction can in large part be attributed to the success of vaccines, improved husbandry techniques and huge technological advances.

Whilst the issue of sea lice remains at the forefront of thought for those working in Scotland's salmon farming industry, there are a number of other health challenges affecting salmonids which have been brought under control with the use of animal vaccines and medicines. For example, the 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of furunculosis, a disease that caused high levels of mortality in farmed salmonids. However the disease has now been virtually eradicated following the widespread use of highly effective vaccines which in turn reduced dramatically the use of antibiotics across aquaculture. This is a prime example of where effective vaccination can play a key role in delivering preventative healthcare outcomes and improved welfare in aquaculture.

As a pharmaceutical company it is vital that we are able to operate in an environment which is conducive to the development and licensing of products. Our work and products are important for the industry to ensure that new and emerging issues can be addressed in a timely manner.

Do you have any comments on how the UK's departure from the European Union might impact on the farmed salmon sector?

Pharmaceutical products currently used in and relied upon by Scotland's aquaculture sector are licensed and regulated within the European regulatory framework. As we have yet to be provided with details about how medicines regulation will be taken forward following the UK's departure from the European Union nor how the UK Government or Scottish Government intends to exercise returned powers from Brussels it is difficult to fully assess the impact that any new post-Brexit system will have.

However as our aquaculture vaccines are currently manufactured in Spain and imported to the UK under license we would not wish to see any additional administrative or logistical barriers erected. Given that many of our products have a short 'shelf life' due to their biological nature and have to be stored at specific temperatures then any delay in customs or caused by the need to carry out additional quality assessments could have a profound impact upon our ability to provide veterinary medicines to the industry in a timely manner. Such additional barriers could in turn lead to a negative impact on fish welfare in Scotland's farmed salmon sector.

MSD Animal Health
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