

A recent blog posting by Alexandra Morton has once again made serious allegations regarding fish health while not providing the public with full information about samples, tests and results. Without knowing where the samples came from, what/how and where tests were run, what the full results reflect or how they were interpreted by someone with fish health expertise, these allegations serve only to cause undue fear in the public.

The BC Salmon Farmers Association shares this information bulletin for those interested in learning more.

About Salmon Alphavirus

There are three types of Salmon Alphavirus which can affect Atlantic salmon and Rainbow trout in freshwater and saltwater, causing damage to the pancreas.

To test for viruses, researchers generally use a preliminary screening test called PCR, and then follow that with cell culture to confirm presence. The PCR test used for the three alphaviruses is general in nature and is designed to detect any of the three. Further cell culture is needed to confirm any presence of the virus.

Government labs have tested for Salmon Alphavirus on BC's salmon farms and have never found it.

SAV is not a federally-reportable disease because of the low risk that it poses.

SAV poses no human health risk.

BC's salmon farmers are seeing good health on their farms with steady growth and low mortality: there are no symptoms of population illness associated with this virus or others. Regular ongoing sampling and testing by independent fish health professional continue to show no virus of concern.

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Concerns about the blog post

This reporting of supposed results is highly unscientific, and the information released alongside it is considerably speculative. The lab reports – nor the name of the lab itself - have not been released – and therefore cannot be reviewed and interpreted by fish health experts.

As the BCSFA has stated in the past - collecting samples from a supermarket is an extremely poor research process: it has no research design, the fish have no internal organs to sample (when most disease sampling tests specific organs), there's no chain of custody and there's a lot of opportunity for cross-contamination. The origin of these samples is not clear.

More questions? Contact us at the BC Salmon Farmers Association and we'd be happy to help answer them.