



## HISTORY OF FALSE FINDINGS RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT NEW CLAIMS INDUSTRY STANDS BY PRACTICES AND TRACK RECORD

For Immediate Release

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CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C. – The conclusions of a new paper, published yesterday (December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017), are not supported by the data in the paper. The paper attempts to use weak correlational data to make some very strong conclusions regarding the transfer of the piscine orthoreovirus (PRv) from farm-raised salmon to wild salmon, and the consequences to those wild salmon. This is clearly an attempt to disguise advocacy as science and is worrying given the importance of the subject.

Statements made by the authors in the paper titled “*The effect of exposure to farmed salmon on piscine orthoreovirus infection and fitness in wild Pacific salmon in British Columbia, Canada*” and published in the online journal PLOS one, are not backed by solid grounded findings, and are contradictory to a wide body of research conducted by leading scientists in Canada and in other parts of the world.

“This paper is part of a deliberate activist campaign led by Alexandra Morton and can hardly be taken as unbiased research. It clouds the important work being done by highly educated and trained scientists in labs in Canada and other parts of the world,” said Jeremy Dunn, Executive Director of the BC Salmon Farmers Association.

These same authors (Alexandra Morton, Richard Routledge, and Fredrick Kibenge) published a paper in 2011 that claimed a “lethal Atlantic virus found in Pacific salmon”. Their finding that the virus Infectious Salmon Anemia was discovered in B.C. was proven to be false, and the laboratory that did the screening work, which is also the same lab used in this current study, lost its international accreditation. Based on this history we believe these findings need to be examined carefully. [link to the press release issued by the authors in 2011](#)

The B.C. government and Fisheries and Oceans Canada issued [statements](#) confirming that the reports were false, harshly criticizing the authors. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans stated, “Because some have chosen to draw conclusions based on unconfirmed information, this has resulted in British Columbia's fishing industry and Canada's reputation being put at risk needlessly.”

It's impossible to sample fish in a supermarket and make any claims with regards to the prevalence and exposure of a pathogen to wild salmon. Likewise, it is very poor science to sample different species at different life stages in different locations in different ways and assert any confidence in the statistics.

If the results of this new paper were accurate, we would expect extremely high and repeatable levels of PRv in wild salmon in Norway, which has not been documented, and likewise high levels in B.C versus other areas such as Oregon and Alaska which again are not documented.

“Our members care deeply about wild salmon, and are engaged in significant research to better understand what may be affecting their populations,” added Dunn.

(more)

Currently, DFO and UBC are working together to study if PRv has an impact on the fitness of salmon. Results of testing on Atlantic salmon show that the presence of the virus has little to no effect on an animal's fitness, trials on Sockeye salmon are currently under way. This study is being led by Dr. Kyle Garver at DFO and Dr. Tony Farrell at UBC.

### Key Facts

- 2017 US research (Gustafson et al. in press), suggests that 3.4% of the wild Salmonid population (returning results sampled in Washington and Alaska) are infected with PRv. Coho and Chinook are the most frequent carriers.
- In BC, prevalence of PRv in wild salmonids is between 0 – 20% (Miller et al., 2014 and Marty et al., 2015).
- Research conducted by Garver et al shows that In fitness tests, PRv did not impact the maximum oxygen carrying capacity, or affect the ability for oxygen to bind to red blood cells, in Atlantic or sockeye salmon
- Causal relationship between PRV and HSMI – Between 2010 and 2016 PRv became associated with HSMI, and in 2017, it was shown to cause HSMI in Norway. This could not be replicated with the BC strain in a laboratory setting.
- PRv is common amongst the populations of salmon on farms in B.C, this has been well known for some time and is the subject of a very active field of research. To date, it is very rare to see PRv associated with any sickness of salmon on farms here.

Farm-raised salmon is B.C.'s highest valued seafood product, the province's top agricultural export, and generates over \$1.5-billion towards the B.C. economy, resulting in over 6,600 jobs.

The BC Salmon Farmers Association represents 52 businesses and organizations throughout the value chain of finfish aquaculture in B.C. Our members account for over 95% of the annual provincial harvest of farm-raised salmon, 100% of the salmon feed produced in B.C., and most of the service and suppliers involved in ensuring that over \$700-million (2016 value) of salmon raised in B.C. gets to domestic and global markets.

For more information visit [BCSalmonFarmers.ca](http://BCSalmonFarmers.ca)

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