


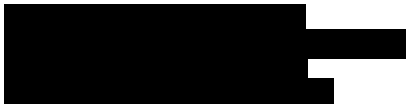




Answer to the request for urgent action by Norway concerning animal health requirements for aquaculture animals

Reference is made to the mission of the EFTA Surveillance Authority ('the Authority') to Norway from 20 to 29 May 2019 in order to evaluate official controls of animal health requirements for aquaculture animals.

The Norwegian government is required to provide the Authority with its comments on the principal findings - including proposing a comprehensive remedial action plan with specific details of how changes will be effected within a timetable reflecting the urgency of the situation.

The principal findings for the mission to Norway are:

- I. Management of Infectious Salmon Anemia ("ISA")
 - i. significant delay in official confirmation of an outbreak of ISA or of its absence following initial notification of suspicion of an ISA outbreak;
 - ii. insufficient control of surrounding areas from the time of initial notification of suspicion of an ISA outbreak until measures are taken to delimit the containment area (protection and surveillance zones) surrounding a compartment or zone in which an ISA outbreak has been officially confirmed, thereby failing to prevent continuation of activities in surrounding areas with potential to spread disease such as movement of well-boats bringing and taking animals to and from the relevant compartment or zone;
 - iii. failure to impose additional measures in ISA-free compartments dependent on the health status of surrounding waters in order to prevent introduction of ISA from surrounding Category III sea waters;
 - iv. limited and late involvement in the procedure for granting ISA-free status, precluding the possibility of effectively controlling compliance with surveillance and related sampling requirements prior to submission of a formal declaration of ISA-free status or of ensuring that such procedure is not compromised by conflicts of interest;
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- v. inability to detect inaccurate or missing information in formal declarations of disease-free status supporting subsequent certifications of ISA-free status, due to limited involvement in the procedure for granting ISA-free status.

II. Information on disease-free status

According to ESA, Norway has *absence of a reliable, up to date and publicly available list of compartments or zones declared free of one or more diseases listed in Part II of Annex IV of Council Directive 2006/88/EC of 24 October 2006 on animal health requirements for aquaculture animals and products thereof, and on the prevention and control of certain diseases in aquatic animals, as amended and as adapted to the EEA Agreement by the sectoral adaptations referred to in Annex I to that Agreement.*

Reply from the NFSA

The following measures are considered:

I. The NFSA has stopped issuing certificates attesting ISA free status

The NFSA will temporarily not issue new certificates attesting ISA free status for live aquatic animals, eggs and gametes until further notice. The NFSA expects that the temporary stop of new certificates will last until the list of compartments and zones declared free for ISA is up to date and publicly available, i.e. 15 July 2019.

II. The NFSA will implement routines to improve the response time to official confirm or rule out a suspicion of ISA.

To improve the response time, the NFSA is planning additional routines such as:

- The NFSA's inspectors should take out samples to verify a suspicion the first weekday after a suspicion. Sampling can be delayed by the weekend and public holidays, but the sampling must take place no later than three days after suspicion.
- The Norwegian Veterinary Institute, which receive samples for confirmation of ISA, is informed about such an improved system and will contribute to more rapid confirmation of ISA.

To shorten the time between suspicion and confirmation of a diagnosis and therefore implement these routines, it is necessary to make changes in the NFSAs internal routines, although the NFSAs inspectors will put these into practice from 15 July 2019.

III. The NFSA will impose better routines to control areas surrounding the outbreak

To have better control of the areas surrounding the outbreak from the time of initial notification of suspicion of an ISA outbreak until measures are taken to delimit the containment area (protection and surveillance zones) surrounding a compartment or zone in which an ISA outbreak has been officially confirmed, the NFSA will:

- Revise the procedures, which establish a containment area. When there is possibility that an outbreak of ISA can infect aquatic animals in other establishments, the NFSA will set into force fast track procedures in order to establish a containment area. As soon as ISA is diagnose, a containment area will be set into force as a local regulation.
- Consider enforcing restrictions on moving of all aquaculture animals in or out of the establishments surrounding the possible outbreak for each case of suspicion of an ISA outbreak.

These routines will be enforced from the time of initial notification of suspicion of an ISA outbreak until measures are taken to delimit the containment area (protection and surveillance zones) surrounding a compartment or zone in which an ISA outbreak has been officially confirmed. To implement these routine, it is necessary to make changes in the NFSA's internal routines, although the NFSA's inspectors will put these into practice from 15 July 2019.

IV. The NFSA will impose additional measures in ISA-free compartments dependent on the health status of surrounding waters

To prevent introduction of ISA virus from surrounding Category III seawaters, we have imposed additional measures in ISA-free compartments dependent on the health status of surrounding waters.

These measures include:

- For each ISA-free segment in a costal area, we will consider establishment of a buffer zone around segments and part of segments in which monitoring will be carried out. Aquaculture animals that are susceptible for ISA will be sampled in the buffer zone to protect the disease-free zone.
- Increased sampling of aquaculture animals in Category III surrounding waters within the buffer zone.
- Better information to and better control of well boat traffic around ISA-free compartments and zones. The NFSA will send a letter addressed to well boats owners emphasizing the requirements in the transport regulations when it comes to transport of live fish between areas with the same or different category status.

To implement these routine, it is necessary to make changes in the NFSAs internal routines, although the NFSAs inspectors will put these into practice from 15 July 2019.

V. The NFSA will implement better routines in the procedure for granting ISA-free status

Establishments that apply for a free status shall inform the NFSA in advance, that is, before they start sampling for granting ISA-free status. The NFSA will, with this change, have a better control of establishments/areas and quality assurance of the samples that are the basis for the free status. It will not be allowed to post-analyze samples if the sets of samples are not complete.

The head office will perform inspections and controls regarding ISA-free status. This implies that the head office will participate together with the regions in inspections of sites that have applied free status or who already have free status. The head office will carry out such inspections to ensure and calibrate the implementation of control and regulatory compliance in the regions. The inspections will consist of document review and inspections of the establishments.

The routines mention above will be in place by 1 October 2019 at the latest.

VI. The NFSA is working with an up to date and publicly available list of compartments and zones declared free for ISA

The Authority pointed out that there is an absence of a reliable, up to date and publicly available list of compartments and zones declared free from ISA in Norway. To solve this problem, the following measures are taking place:

- The head office, together with the NFSA's regions, is conducting a check of the establishments that are declared free from ISA in Norway are in line with the current regulations.

- The NFSA is currently working to update the list of ISA-free zones and compartments annexed to the Norwegian legislation and on the NFSA's website, so the information available is reliable.
- Implement routines on how to update ISA-free zones.
- Implement routines to publish and update ISA-free zones in Barentswatch

The updated list of compartments and zones declared free from ISA will be publicly available from 15 July 2019. The routines mention above will be in place latest by 1 October 2019, although this information will be sent out to the NFSA's inspectors and the industry so that they could put these routines into practice from 15 July 2019.

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