

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel: 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521. Animal Concern incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which has been Campaigning for animals since 1876 E-MAIL: animals@jfrobins.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/>

To all Animal Concern, Save Our Seals Fund and Animal Concern Advice Line supporters.

Dear All,

I write again re the shooting of seals by salmon farmers in Scotland (they're not really Scottish salmon farmers 'because the owners are mostly Vikings called Sven and Lars).

ITV put out a piece [last night](#) (Thursday 8th October) and they have broadcast a follow up [today](#) (Friday 9th October).

This second piece covers the link between the RSPCA and seal shooting and it is the item I would like you to respond to by writing to the RSPCA and The Scottish Government.

Let's deal with the RSPCA first:

As you know we have been campaigning for ten years to get RSPCA Freedom Foods to make it a rule that RSPCA endorsed salmon farmers cannot shoot seals. However the RSPCA, like the Scottish Government, has always allowed salmon farmers a get-out clause by saying it is OK to shoot seals as a last resort. Regretfully they have continued that policy in their new rules for RSPCA endorsed salmon farmers. I also see the RSPCA has rebranded their Freedom Food division as RSPCA Assured – assured of what you may ask?

Rather than repeat myself I'll draft below a letter or e-mail for you to send to the RSPCA which better explains the situation. Please try and customise the letter. It is especially important for any of you who are supporters or members of the RSPCA to write to them. If you are you may feel like telling the RSPCA that your future donations or a legacy may be at risk if they continue allowing the killing of seals at "their" salmon farms.

I was going to give you details for contacting the RSPCA Chief Executive but I've just been on the RSPCA website and there are plenty of ways to donate money or join (£750 for Life Membership!) or read the Twittering's of their ELEVEN Twittering press officers (they have more non-Twittering ones) but I cannot find the name or contact details of whoever is supposed to be running the place.

After a bit of digging around on external websites I've found this e-mail address for the nameless RSPCA Chief Executive: executive@rspca.org.uk

You could always resort to snail mail and post a letter to: The Chief Executive & The Council, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS.

Here's a suggestion for your e-mail and/or letter to the RSPCA. Remember to give your details for a reply.

Dear RSPCA Chief Executive and Council,

Please note that I would like a reply from your Chief Executive and/or the Chair of your Council and not from your complaints or advice teams.

I watched the ITV News on Friday 9th October when it was reported that RSPCA Assured salmon farmers in Scotland are still permitted by you to shoot seals as “a last resort”.

I understand that a salmon farmer in Shetland recently joined the 13% of salmon producers who have installed and maintain predator exclusion nets to keep seals well away from their stock. This not only removes any excuse to shoot seals it allows salmon farmers to meet their legal obligation under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to protect their stock from the attention of predators – something they simply cannot do by shooting seals.

The new user of predator exclusion nets installed them after seal damage allowed over a £1M of farmed salmon to escape into the wild. This makes it fairly obvious that their previous use of bullets to shoot seals was not a last resort but an economic decision. It's cheaper to shoot seals than to use anti-predator nets.

Please tell me how many RSPCA endorsed salmon farmers use predator exclusion nets and how many do not? I urge you to only give valuable RSPCA endorsement to salmon farms which install and maintain proper predator exclusion nets thus eliminating seal shooting and meeting their legal requirement to protect the welfare of their fish as required by the Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. If a salmon farmer tells you they cannot use predator exclusion nets because of where their farm is situated please tell them to move their farm to a site where they can use them or throw them out of the RSPCA Assured scheme.

Yours sincerely,

Now for the Scottish Government: e-mail to: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

If you live in Scotland please copy your e-mail to your MSPs and ask them to do whatever they can to make predator exclusion nets compulsory on all marine salmon farms in Scotland.

You'll find your MSPs details here: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/help/32438.aspx>

I'd appreciate it if those of you who contact Mr. Lochhead and your MSPs would let me know.

Richard Lochhead MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment,
The Scottish Government.

Dear Mr. Lochhead,

I watched you on the ITV News on Friday night when you discussed fish farmers shooting seals at salmon farms in Scotland.

I believe that seals are only supposed to be shot as a last resort, after all non-lethal alternatives have been tried.

However I understand that only around 13% of salmon farms use predator exclusion nets to keep seals well away from the salmon in the farm cages.

Grieg Seafood recently said the number of seals it had shot had dropped significantly because it was installing predator exclusion nets to protect their salmon. Obviously, before they installed these nets, they were not shooting seals as a last resort.

Can you please tell me if the "last resort" rule is a legal requirement in the license the Scottish Government issues to seal shooters?

Can you also please tell me why you give licenses to shoot seals to fish farms which do not use predator exclusion nets?

Yours sincerely,

That's it for now. Many thanks for your help with this, it is much appreciated.

Cheers 4 now,

John