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

Dear Supporters,

Thought you might like to read a couple of things in today's Sunday Herald.

I first wrote to the US Government in 2011 in a joint letter organised by Don Staniford of the then Canadian based Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA). As well as Animal Concern and Save Our Seals Fund other Scottish organisations which signed on to the letter were Sealife Adventures, Hebridean Partnership, Marine Concern, Orkney Seal Rescue and Seaprobe Atlantis. Our hope was to persuade the American Government to use the existing Marine Mammal Protection Act to ban the import of salmon from Scotland until the Scottish Government made it illegal for salmon producers to kill seals.

A year later I wrote from Save Our Seals Fund to a couple of US Government Departments and to several salmon farming companies and industry bodies in the USA. Don Staniford at GAAIA also kept up the pressure on the US officials. In my communications I simply explained how seals were shot under Government Licence in Scotland and, as US salmon producers are not allowed to shoot seals and have to employ people to install and maintain expensive predator exclusion nets, the Scottish Government was giving salmon farms in Scotland an unfair financial advantage over their American competitors.

The American Government announced last month that they are granting our request and will amend their legislation in January 2017. There will be a five year period for Scotland to act to stop the killing of seals by salmon producers. From January 2022, if the Scottish Government still allows salmon producers to shoot seals, there will be a ban on importing Scottish salmon into the USA. I was pleased to see that when announcing the new legislation the US Government specifically mentioned communications received from Save Our Seals Fund.

As you know the salmon farming industry and the Scottish Government have been heaping praise on themselves because they claim that the number of seals being shot has greatly reduced since the seal licensing system was introduced. As the shooting of seals is not policed or monitored those claims are not worth a jot. For decades we have been calling for the shooting of seals to be made a criminal offence and for the use of proper predator exclusion nets to be made compulsory. Since 2006 I have been totally ignored by our Government Ministers when I explain to them that without predator exclusion nets (currently used by circa 10% of farms) salmon farmers cannot meet their legal duty to protect the welfare of their stock as required by the Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

Perhaps with this ruling from the USA our Government will finally do what we have been urging them to do for forty years. Stop the persecution of seals in Scottish waters and give salmon trapped in filthy floating factory fish farms real protection from the presence of predators.

Read more about this on the links below.

Cheers 4 now,

John

PS In a few hours I am heading to a sea loch a few miles up the road where I've just had a report of a dead seal pup with a severe head injury.

Scotland's 'trigger-happy' salmon farmers risk losing £200m US export market:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/environment/14735738.Scotland_39_s_39_trigger_happy_39_salmon_farmers_risk_losing_200m_US_export_market/?ref=rss

Cruelty and pollution have no place in Scotland's waters:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/letters/14735766.Cruelty_and_pollution_have_no_place_in_Scotland_39_s_waters/