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Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company
(Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.
It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

Coastal and island local councils have been asked to hold a moratorium on the expansion of salmon farming due to concerns over increased pollution levels from the farms. MSPs have also been asked to try and curb Government enthusiasm for expansion of the industry. On the eve of industry celebrations over the 25th anniversary of Scottish salmon farms being awarded French label rouge status conservation and animal welfare organisations have got together to remind people that in Scotland a red label is usually a warning sign.

John Robins of Animal Concern and Save Our Seals Fund states; "Salmon farming is a blot on the Scottish marine environment and the industry needs to be curbed, not celebrated." Our local and national Governments should protect the marine environment from salmon farming and not collude with the industry to allow a massive increase in the size and number of these filthy floating factory fish farms around our coast and islands."

EDITORS NOTES: Animal Concern, Save Our Seals Fund, Compassion in World Farming and the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture will be holding a joint press conference at 10.30am tomorrow (Thursday, 16th March) in The Blue Room, Serenity Café, 8 Jackson Entry, The Tun, 111 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8P. Below is a copy of the e-mail to Scottish local authorities where salmon farms are commonplace.

A similar e-mail has been sent to all MSPs. We have also written to the authorities behind the Label Rouge accreditation scheme asking them to drop Scottish farmed salmon.

To the Chief Executives & Council Leaders of the following Scottish Councils: Argyll & Bute Council; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Highlands Council, Orkney Islands Council; Shetland Islands Council.

Dear Chief Executive and Council Leader,

I write to request that your Council impose a moratorium on the granting of planning permission for any new marine salmon farms or for the extension of any existing salmon farms operating in your Council area.

I would be grateful if you would copy this e-mail to all relevant Council Departments, Council employees and Council Committees.

As you may be aware there are plans to double production of Atlantic Salmon farmed in Scotland over the next few years. These plans include establishing farms at many new sites and greatly increasing production at existing farms.

We oppose this proposed expansion for many reasons including the shooting of seals at the farms, the increased welfare problems caused to the salmon if stocking densities increase, the damage done to wild fish stocks due to increased sealice numbers and the environmental damage caused by the increased pollution created by any expansion of salmon farming.

Salmon farming is in a crisis at the moment with several cases of mass stock mortalities caused by disease and the use of new methods of removing sealice from fish. Millions of fish have been killed in these incidents.

Documents obtained via Freedom of Information legislation show there have been huge increases in the use of chemicals to combat mass sealice infestations on salmon farms. One area of particular concern is over the adverse effect some of these chemicals may be having on plankton. The agents which kill parasitic sealice may also be killing the spat of wild shellfish which could lead to a breakdown of the basic marine food chain and decimation, including local extinctions, of wild mussels, oysters, scallops, razor clams, crabs and lobsters.

Media reports based on documents obtained under FOI suggest that SEPA may have a very close relationship with the salmon farming industry and it has been claimed that a SEPA report on increased pollution levels associated with salmon farming was toned down at the request of industry officials. I don't want to simply give you my spin on this situation and I urge you to read for yourself the documents obtained under FOI legislation by the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA) <http://salmonfarmingkills.com/>

I also recommend reading recent articles by Rob Edwards, Environmental Editor of the Sunday Herald. You can access several of these via links on the GAAIA website.

Our coastal and island communities and economies rely on a clean and healthy marine environment. For many years I have been extremely concerned that the Scottish Government and the Government Ministers and Government Departments which should be protecting our marine and coastal environment have been far too close to those who exploit that environment for profit.

For instance when the Scottish Government established a "Seals Forum" to advise on the replacement of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 I was denied membership despite the fact I was an expert on the notorious "Netsman's Defence" clause of the Act and had been responsible for the only successful prosecution under the Act (Portree Sheriff Court, 1/8/1989). The Seals Forum was heavily biased in favour of seal shooting with those actively shooting seals or supporting calls for a seal cull outnumbering seal protection representatives by nearly 3 to 1. It was of no surprise to me when the Government refused to insist that salmon farmers use proper predator exclusion nets and instead opted for the much cheaper but far less effective option of issuing licences to shoot seals.

I hope your local authority will take seriously your responsibility to protect our coastal environment and impose an immediate complete ban on the issue of permissions for new or expanded salmon farms.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
For Animal Concern & Save Our Seals Fund

PS I understand that you, and perhaps some of your colleagues, may have been invited by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) to events in Edinburgh tomorrow (Thursday 16th March) to mark the 25th anniversary of Scottish farmed salmon being granted the French food mark "Label Rouge".

Animal Concern, Save Our Seals Fund, Compassion in World Farming and the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture will be holding an alternative event to remind people that in Scotland a red label is usually a warning sign.

We had booked a conference room at the same venue as the SSPO but for some reason the Macdonald Hotel at 81 Holyrood Road later discovered they needed our room to accommodate the SSPO and they politely cancelled our booking. We have found an alternative venue a few doors along the street from the hotel. We will be in The Blue Room, Serenity Café, 8 Jackson Entry, The Tun, 111 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8PJ from 10.30am to 1pm and then 3pm to 5pm on Thursday 16th March.

If you are in the area please pop in for a coffee and a chat about why salmon farming deserves a red flag rather than a red label. If you have already left for Edinburgh I hope your PA will forward this message to you.