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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.

Ms Mandy Rhodes,
Editor and Managing Director,
Holyrood Magazine,
32 Calton Road,
Edinburgh, EH8 8DP

Dear Ms Rhodes,

I write concerning the advertorial, sponsored by the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC) and written by Heather Jones, CEO of the SAIC, which was published on your website today;
<https://www.holyrood.com/comment/view.associate-feature-tech-food-and-health-will-define-the-future-and-scotland-15685.htm> .

I must admit that my faith and trust in Holyrood Magazine has been shaken after reading some of the misleading nonsense contained in the above article.

Of particular concern is the paragraph; ***“With farmed animals, we know they are raised in a certain quality of environment, with health, wellbeing, and hygiene standards. Indeed, in salmon’s case, Scotland is among the best in the world for animal welfare, with very high-standard husbandry practices developed since we first began farming fish almost 50 years ago.”***

A basic error is that; “ ***we first began farming fish almost 50 years ago.***” We actually began farming fish in Scotland 500 years ago or more with carp and other species reared in ponds to supply monastic communities and the like. What we did start around 45 years ago was intensive factory farming of salmon.

A ballistic error is the statement; “ ***in salmon’s case, Scotland is among the best in the world for animal welfare, with very high-standard husbandry practices***” .

If your sub-editor had replaced the word ***“best”*** with the word ***“worst”*** and the word ***“high”*** with ***“low”***, a work of extremely imaginative but very misleading fiction would have been transformed into an accurate and informative news story.

Salmon farming in Scotland has probably the lowest animal welfare record and highest mortality rate of any of our livestock industries. Literally tens of millions of salmon die every year from disease, parasite infestation, accidental release and very poor standard husbandry

practises. Various physical methods have been tried in a bid to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals used to kill sealice on intensively farmed salmon. Huge numbers of fish have been killed through use of mechanical and water heating devices which are supposed to kill sealice but, through operator error, have also killed the fish they are supposed to protect.

The author also refers to “**sustainably sourced protein**” and “**sustainable fish farms**”. The word “sustainable” has no relevance when talking about an industry which uses as much as three or four tonnes of wild fish to produce just one tonne of finished product. The Co-op was one of the last companies to use the word “sustainable” on their Scottish farmed salmon. They apologised and changed their labelling after I pointed out their error.

It is also misleading to refer to aquaculture occupying “**less than 0.002%**” of Scottish Marine waters. If you include waters out to our three mile limit and ignore the detritus which spreads out even further than all the underwater gear associated with salmon farms, 0.002% might be accurate but it does not take into account the reality of the situation. Salmon farms are not spread out over all our seas but are concentrated in inshore waters and sea lochs. On some coastal roads in the West of Scotland you are never more than ten minutes away from the next vast array of salmon farm cages. Submerged acoustic scarers are used to drive marine mammals away from the natural habitat they have lost to salmon farms. These scarers can effect areas far wider than the physical site occupied by the farm.

I am dismayed that your usual high standards of journalism have been compromised by this “article”.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Animal Concern