Fish welfare: a critical success factor for aquaculture:
Making welfare work – Scottish Atlantic salmon

John Avizienius, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
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Who are the RSPCA?

• The oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world
• Founded in 1824, before the police
• We have rehoming centres, clinics and hospitals all over England and Wales
• In 2012 over 130,000 animals rescued
• We have our own specialist scientific departments and work with all animals
These images are what we are usually associated with in the UK.
Why fish?

- Only involved with farmed terrestrial species
- Freedom Food established in 1994
- Approached by salmon farmer from Scotland in 1999-2000
The different roles....

• Develops welfare standards with industry, vets, researchers
• Independently monitors scheme members
• Administers/markets the scheme
• Formally assesses scheme members at least once/year
Do we need to discuss welfare?

- Do fish feel pain?
- Welfare is more than health
- Commission COM 229, 2013 - Sustainable aquaculture guidelines
- Com 511, 2002, updated 2006

www.rspca.org.uk/farmanimals
Could the animal model used for other species be used for fish?

- Handling/management
- Crowding
- Health Planning
- Environmental
- Slaughter/killing
- Transport

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What do we look at?

• Fish behavior, physical characteristics
• Inputs and outcomes
• Setting intervention levels
• Action plans for when these are exceeded
• Based on ideal scenarios – animal needs
• Processor reports
• Must be prepared to make decisions
Handling

• Observe the simple things
• Look at the water at the end of the process
• Is there evidence of excessive scaling etc
• How are the fish behaving?
Health Planning

- Alien concept for fish?
- Poor medicine availability
- New diseases
- Biological controls
- Improve mortality rate
- Set targets
Health Planning - Vaccination
Even worse for processing
Health Planning – Sea Lice

- Lack of medicines
- Resistance
- New treatments
- Wrasse/lumpfish welfare
- Breeding
- Sustainability
Crowding
Crowding 2
Environmental – water quality and.....

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Slaughter/killing
Slaughter/killing 2
Wellboat Transport
Observe all stages of the journey
Flesh quality is important
Does the consumer really care?

- Mintel (May 2010)
  Animal welfare is Britain’s No 1 food concern (approx 40% worried about this)
- Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) 2012 report noted that 30% of shoppers expected to continue to buy higher welfare products
- McDonald’s – Freedom Food pork

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Celebrity Support

Jamie Oliver – “I support Freedom Food because higher standards of farm animal welfare ultimately benefit everyone. Plus there is no welfare organisation more well respected than the RSPCA.”
Aquaculture - challenges

- Aquaculture - many species
- Fastest growing sector
- Oceanic aquaculture
- Species-specific biology
- Animal centric
In our experience - Good welfare is good business

- Fish have a better life
- Producer makes more profit
- Third party verification/retailer needs
- Identify problems - find solutions
- Better to work together in partnership
- Consumer confidence is absolutely critical
Thank you for your attention

Any Questions?

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