

The Regulation of Sea Lice in Scotland



Introduction

Sea lice occur naturally in the marine environment and live on the skin of fish. There are two species of sea lice that infect salmonids in Scottish waters - *Lepeophtheirus salmonis*, which only infects salmonids, and *Caligus elongatus* which has been reported to infect over 80 different fish species, including salmonids.

Infection with *L. salmonis* is one of the most important health issues for the Scottish salmon aquaculture industry and sea lice are controlled on farmed fish in a variety of ways. This includes using licensed medicines, physical methods or using cleaner fish such as wrasse and lumpfish.

Regulation

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007, as amended in 2013, gives Scottish Ministers legal powers to carry out inspections, to look at sea lice records, and assesses the measures in place to prevent, control and reduce parasites on farms. These powers are exercised by Marine Scotland's Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) and the failure by any aquaculture production business to have satisfactory measures for the prevention, control or reduction of sea lice may result in the serving of an enforcement notice.

This notice may require the execution of works or the taking of other steps to ensure the prevention, control or reduction of sea lice.

Sea lice reporting

Marine Scotland's policy with regards to satisfactory measures for the control of sea lice has changed, with the introduction of weekly reporting of sea lice levels from all relevant sites.

On 29 March 2021 [The Fish Farming Businesses \(Reporting\) \(Scotland\) Order 2020](#) came into force. It requires Aquaculture Production Businesses in Scotland that farm fish (other than in freshwater sites) to report the average number of adult female sea lice (*L. salmonis*) counted per fish per site in the reporting week to the Scottish Ministers one week in arrears. The average is defined as, the total number of adult female sea lice counted on sampled fish in a site in the reporting week (a seven day period from Monday to Sunday) divided by the number of fish sampled in that site in that reporting week.

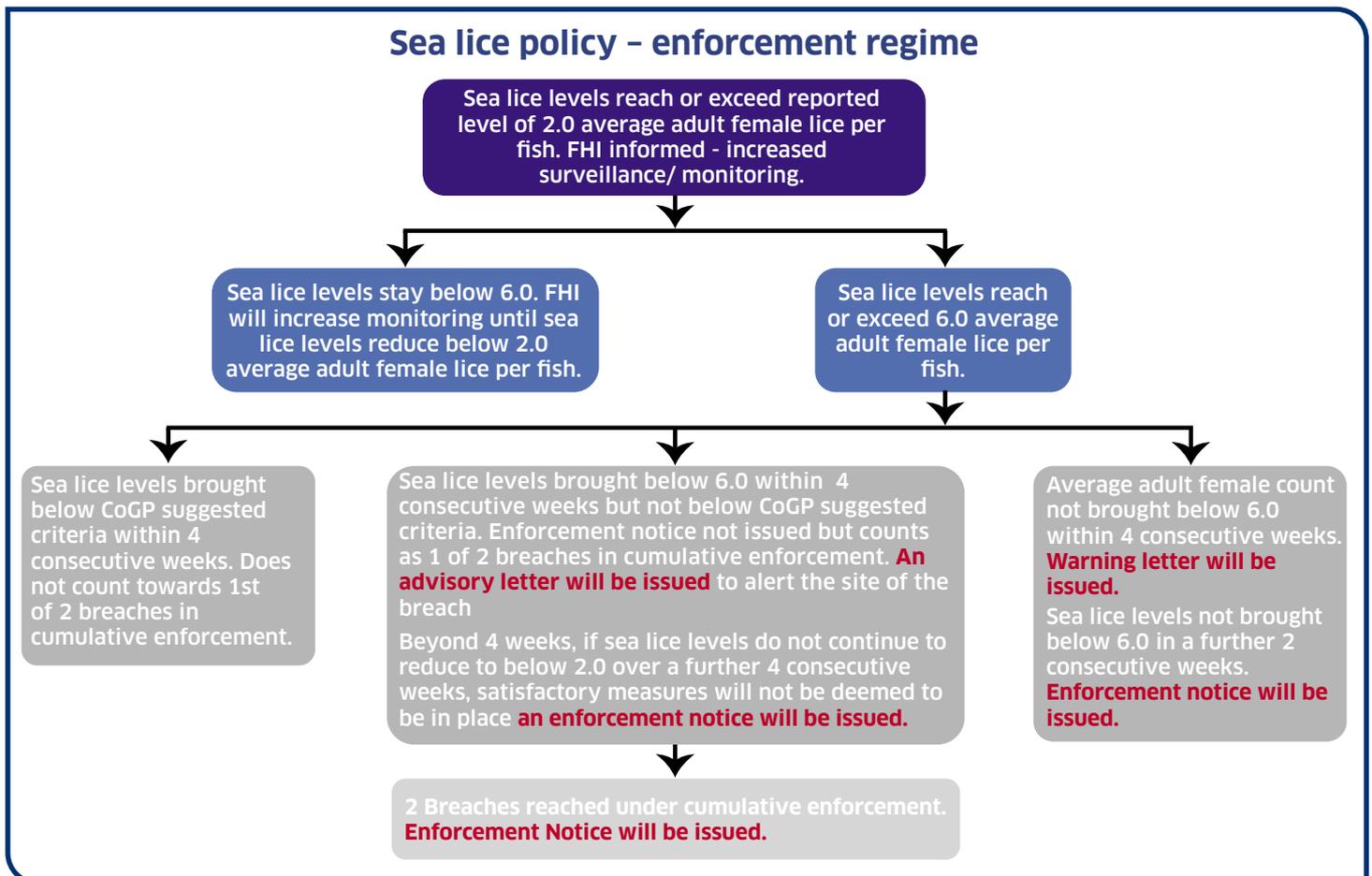
The provisions of the Order introduce a change in sea lice reporting. While previous arrangements required reporting only where specific levels were met or exceeded (i.e. a weekly average

of (2 adult female sea lice per fish), sea lice numbers now need to be reported weekly irrespective of the count. Where no count is conducted the reason must be given. Data will be published to promote transparency.

Enforcement regime

Where reported sea lice counts reach or exceed an average of 2 adult female sea lice per fish, FHI will increase monitoring of that site and will continue to do so until either the weekly

average adult female sea lice count per fish is reduced to below 2 (to be referred to as the increased monitoring level), or an intervention limit of an average of 6 adult female sea lice per fish (or above) on any fish farming site is reached. Reaching the intervention limit requires the Aquaculture Production Business to take action which will reduce the weekly average number of adult female sea lice per fish at the site below the increased monitoring level of 2. If satisfactory measures cannot be demonstrated then enforcement action will be taken (see the diagram below).



Further Information

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