



Your aquaculture update

From RSPCA Assured

Welcome

Welcome to the very first RSPCA Assured Aquaculture e-newsletter. Hopefully, you will find it interesting, useful and entertaining. I would love to hear your good news stories, awards you have been nominated for, personal and business achievements. This is your opportunity, as well as ours, to share information, photos, thoughts, and ideas, as well as standards updates and pertinent industry news.

A message from Joe Bailey Head of Farming, Welfare & Wellbeing



Joe began her career with the RSPCA as an Inspector back in 1994. Since then, she has worked as a Trading Standards Animal Health and Welfare Inspector, Livestock Technical Manager for NSF and Farm Community Network Ambassador. She is also a Nuffield Farming Scholar, vice chair of the Nuffield Central region committee and is on the boards of Global Animal Welfare Assurance (Alliance) and One Welfare Phoenix. Joe attends and speaks at events, conferences, industry and government meetings and is a well-regarded figure in the industry. In 2017, Joe was awarded the CharityComms inspiring communicator award.

As I write this I am still very much desk and housebound, but things are now progressing so rapidly who knows where I will be as you read this! I have to be honest it is lovely not to be travelling so much and living out of a suitcase, and my dog and cats are delighted, but I am missing getting out and about meeting everyone and had been really looking forward to Aquaculture 2020, which has now been postponed to 2021.

The farming community (both aquaculture and agriculture) is a resilient bunch, and coping with the unexpected is commonplace. Covid-19 following so shortly after Brexit has thrown more challenges personally and professionally than ever before. But we continue to bend, not break, and show determination, resolve, compassion, and above all else, kindness.

We are finally recognising our heroes. Not just the incredible NHS, but the essential

workers which of course includes farmers. It's that spirit of 'getting on with it' whilst supporting others and going above and beyond, that our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be told about in their history lessons, and we, of course, will never forget.

In this newsletter, you will hopefully find some interesting articles and inspiring stories that make me, and I hope you, feel so proud to be part of the farming community. Enjoy reading, and please keep safe, keep well and keep going.

Assessments Continue with our Members' Help

By Dorian Cross, Field Assessment Manager

At a time where we are all facing a shared anxiety and disruption to our working environment, it remains extremely important that RSPCA Assured continues to work with, and on behalf of, our members.

Brand security and scheme integrity remain essential to secure the premiums our members benefit from.

By conducting 'virtual' assessments in a remote and safe environment, we are assuring both retailers and consumers that higher farm animal welfare is being maintained by our members under these difficult circumstances.

Whilst the technology involved in a 'virtual' assessment is new to some and not easy for everyone to use, the results are proving very impressive. We appreciate this achievement has only been made possible with the full cooperation of our members for which RSPCA Assured is truly grateful.

Importantly, our assessment contingency plan that we have put in place provides the same level of measuring compliance with the RSPCA welfare standards for farmed animals, comparable to that of a conventional site visit assessment.

This approach has successfully provided the means to continue to validate certification for our members, gaining the approval of our certification body NSF. However, this approach remains a temporary arrangement, until such time our assessors can return to visiting farms again, as nothing fully replaces talking with members in person and seeing their animals up close.

You will have seen that this week we announced a cautious phased return to on-site assessments. Please click [here](#) for the most up to date information.

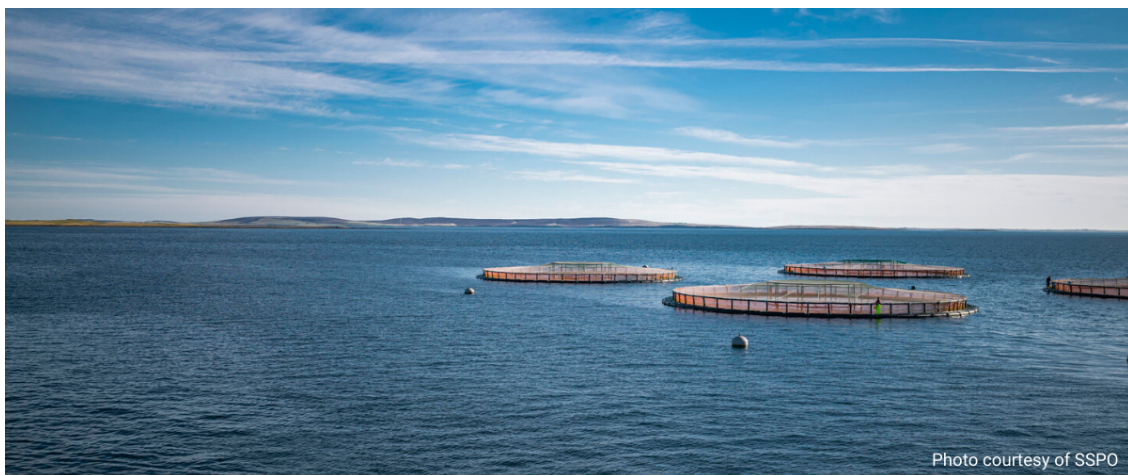
Desktop Assessment Tips

By Julie Taylor, Senior Assessor

As we are all getting used to the new temporary virtual assessments, we have put together some tips here to make them run smoothly and successfully.

- The assessor may ask you to conduct a video test to establish whether a good signal can be received, the best method to carry out the assessments, and so you can familiarise yourself with the relevant app that will be used (Google Meet, WhatsApp etc)
- You may find that earphones are useful in noisier livestock areas to help you hear one another
- Prior to your desktop assessment, please make sure the mobile device you'll be using is fully charged and that you have all the documents to hand that the assessor pre-advised you about.
- Photographs and electronic versions of documents may be submitted in advance if you wish, however this is not compulsory as it should be possible to examine documents and records via the live video link at the assessment
- Any files you choose to submit in advance will be stored securely and removed permanently as soon as your assessment is over

Thank you, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to [get in touch](#).



Clarification on New Plastics, Soy and Palm Oil Policies

By Rebecca Lenik, PR Manager

We recently introduced new policies for plastics, soy and palm oil.

To clarify, these new policies relate **only** to packaged products and **not** to the use of soy or palm oil in animal feed, as we appreciate the logistics involved.

They are a requirement of the logo use guidelines used by retailers and processor/packers only and not producer members.

As such, they are not included in the RSPCA welfare standards. However, we do make a **recommendation only** that producers consider the use of soy and palm oil in their animal feed as it's becoming increasingly important to consumers.

You can find out more [here](#).

New Standards

By John Avizienious, Scientific & Tech Advisory Section Manager

New Rainbow Trout standards were published in March and new Atlantic salmon standards were due for publication in June.

However, the Atlantic salmon standards have been caught up in a log jam that has been caused by the Covid-19 situation, and so they may now be published in the autumn at the earliest unless the situation changes. We will keep you posted.

In the meantime, if you have any queries, please [contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department](#).

Welfare Outcome Assessments

By John Avizienious, Scientific & Tech Advisory Section Manager

The RSPCA believes that the measurement of key animal welfare outcomes is the most meaningful way of assessing the welfare of animals in any farming system, both terrestrial and non-terrestrial.

This need not be a difficult process, and will already be familiar to aquaculture members because much of the information that is required will already be recorded during routine fish sampling, for example, fins, operculae, eye damage and any notable conditions such as abnormal behaviours, deformities and skin condition.

This information is only useful if it is used to improve fish welfare via the health and welfare plan or by being aggregated together anonymously in order to identify trends for certain measures over time. To an extent, this model is already being used in relation to sea lice counts being submitted to the SSPO. Could this be extended to other welfare measures?

This issue is being mentioned now because we intend to make animal welfare outcome measures a requirement for the next edition of the RSPCA standards for farmed Atlantic salmon in 2022. This should give ample time for us to discuss this issue with members and examine the best way of how we take this forward.

Congratulations to Malcolm and John!

The organisers of the Aquaculture Awards have announced the finalists for this year's competition.

We are pleased to announce that John Avizienious, RSPCA Scientific & Tech Advisory

Section Manager, and Malcolm Johnstone, RSPCA Assured Scheme Manager Aquaculture, have been shortlisted for an award in the Animal Welfare (MSD Animal Health) category.

For the full shortlist, please click [here](#).

Malcolm Johnstone's change of role

We are pleased to announce that Malcolm has now taken up the role of Aquaculture Manager for RSPCA Assured; this change means that Malcolm has joined the wider Farming Team and reports directly to Joe Bailey, Head of Farming at RSPCA Assured.

Whilst this move results in Malcolm no longer being practically associated with day to day assessment coordination, he will be adopting more of a species technical expert position and continue to be the main contact on technical issues. This leaves Malcolm the opportunity to apply himself within the business/technical development areas of the aquaculture scheme.

Malcolm's thoughts on how his new role may evolve:



After fourteen happy years being directly involved and managing assessments for the RSPCA Assured scheme and all that is involved, the opportunity to move on to a new and different role has come my way. Whilst I will miss the direct, hands-on assessment management, this new role will allow me to look at the wider picture within the Aquaculture sector both on a national and global level.

Part of my new role involves raising the profile of RSPCA Assured and the Aquaculture Industry. This entails meeting with and being involved in, many of the new processes being undertaken by our members as the industry evolves to meet specific challenges seen across the sector. For example, lice, seals, gill and environmental issues. I will also be involved in carrying out a growing number of presentations and will carry out talks to industry, academia and wider sectors of the public to ensure that fish welfare is at the heart of farming.

I am determined to retain my links with all of our members both in the U.K. and abroad, so you will still see me out and about at members' sites speaking to the staff and managers on farms. In my opinion, maintaining personal contact with the farms is one of the most important aspects of my new role, alongside attending regular management meetings with our members so I can be fully aware and up to date with all aspects of the Aquaculture Industry.

The new role will allow me the freedom to have discussions, offer advice and help

members without the constraints and conflict of interest that would have been a factor if I was still involved in assessments. So, please be reassured I am still here and please get in touch anytime for a chat or to discuss any aspects of our scheme.

I believe the Aquaculture sector is one of the most transparent, dynamic and forward-looking farming sectors (though I may be biased). Whilst there are some issues within the sector, my new role should allow me to work alongside and in partnership with our members to be part of the solution that I know the industry and RSPCA Assured are working hard to achieve. These include:

- Reducing the seal culling rate to zero*
- Working with industry, members, and scientists, to discover and encourage alternate methods of predator control that cause no harm to wildlife or farmed fish*
- Working collaboratively with colleagues and internal/external stakeholders, looking at the major challenges facing aquaculture and how we can help overcome them*
- Offering member advice, support and value for membership and looking at welfare and wellbeing*
- Maintaining and developing relationships with members and industry, and progressing current workstreams including standards development with the RSPCA Farm Animals Department, seals, lice, disease, ADDs, environmental and mortality risk management working groups.*
- Explore international opportunities with other farm assurance bodies, acting as a consultant on behalf of the scheme when required*

Finally, we were really looking forward to meeting with all of you at Aquaculture 2020 in Aviemore this month, but this has now unfortunately been rescheduled to 2021 due to the current Covid19 restrictions. For me personally, this will be a great opportunity to see old and hopefully new faces at our stand so please come along - everyone is welcome. It will also be the perfect opportunity for me to introduce Joe who, as Head of Farming at RSPCA Assured, is really keen to be involved with and learn more about our sector and the people who make it work so well.

Meet RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer Jocelyn Warwick

Jocelyn Warwick is new to the RSPCA Farm Animals Department and will be working primarily in aquaculture. Jocelyn will be well known to most of our members having worked as a contract Assessor carrying out Assessments for Freedom Food between 2010 and 2014. Here she explains a little of her background:

I was brought up on an arable and pig farm on the Moray Coast and went on to study a BSc (Hons) Degree in Agriculture in Wales with a year working on a cattle ranch in Alberta.

I started my career as an Assistant Farm Manager on a breeding sow unit for two years. Then I went to work as a Project Officer in the agricultural marketing sector of the Highlands & Islands Development Board for three years working across all sectors - at that time every crofter was going to be a fish farmer! I also managed a farm in Portugal for 30 years until it was sold.

My work in aquaculture started in 2002 as an Auditor with the Soil Association and Food Certification International and eventually, Freedom Food as RSPCA Assured was known then. I studied the PgCert in Aquaculture through St Andrews then left to go back to working on a farm and managing a novel hydrophilic Anaerobic Digester. This led to a job at Glenmorangie Distillery operating their LeMbr AD system which uses the AD plant to clean up the Dornoch Firth and reintroduce native oysters. The system has been so successful that several other distilleries are now installing it on their sites.

Scottish Sea Farms help those in need

Scottish Sea Farms (SSF) has been doing some great work amid the Covid-19 outbreak in helping people in need. Here they tell us what they have been doing:

- SSF employees delivered toiletries to Lorn & Islands Hospital (as shown in the photo)
- We supplied a couple of deliveries of face masks to Etive House Care Home (also Oban) when they were experiencing shortages
- We have provided protective suits and hand sanitiser to the Scottish Ambulance Service operating in the Oban area
- We have gifted protective glasses to the nursing team at the Diabetes Unit of the University Hospital Monklands
- Finally, we have supplied protective face masks to St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh in response to their appeal on Facebook for additional PPE items

This is in addition to the individual efforts of staff: from shopping and collection prescriptions on behalf of more vulnerable family and neighbours, to temporarily reducing hours with Scottish Sea Farms in order to increase hours as a Pharmacy Assistant or to deliver supermarket deliveries. Plus, crocheting ear saver bands for NHS workers and carers!

Well done to all at Scottish Sea Farms!



Positive Stories from Mowi

We're pleased to hear of some great, positive stories from Mowi amidst the Covid-19 crisis, such as employees who signed up to Move it in March as part of the national campaign, Walk All Over Cancer continued to do so despite various challenges.

Find out more about what they are doing [here](#).

Nuffield Webinar: Stay Calm through Covid

By guest contributor at Nuffield Farming

There seem to be two clear camps of people I've come across in Lockdown, says Holly Beckett – those who are extremely stressed and distressed and feel a total lack of control over the situation and the other group - like me – is loving lockdown! There is a sense of calm and a more relaxed pace of life and ultimately, real change comes from crisis and the opportunities we have to really change the reality of British agriculture have not been so open for decades – what an exciting time!



Holly, Director of Focussed Farmers set up in 2017 to introduce mindfulness to agriculture, has recently run an online series of workshops entitled *Stay Calm through Covid* which began with an interview with three farmers who have been working with Holly through Focussed Farmers to bring mindfulness, coupled with goal setting techniques, into their daily lives for a number of years.

The title of the interview was *Crisis is a State of Mind* and the farmers, in turn, explained what mindfulness, increased through the mental exercise of meditation had brought to them, their family and their farming business and the stories were a far cry from a crisis.

Rob Bebbington, arable farmer from Shropshire explained how at the time of coming across Focussed Farmers he felt like he was treading water and not as focussed as he could be. He noticed a difference straight away in that he began to be able to ignore the noise, had a much clearer mind through the day that allowed him to focus on what was really important to him to get done.

Dan Burdett, dairy farmer and 2019 Nuffield Scholar was not only facing the trials and tribulations of a global lockdown but has also just been struck by an outbreak of TB. Dan had taken interest in the programme as he felt his mind was cluttered a lot of the time and he was always starting lots of jobs but seemed to not finish them. He has found that nowadays he can notice quickly if the noise in his head is getting too loud or too busy and he knows how effective it is to just stop and take a mindful moment, go for a walk and just focus on one thing. He now focusses only on the things he can change and explained how the tools he gained from Focussed Farmers have been really helpful to keep him on an even keel over the past few months, whatever he is faced with.

Focussed Farmers is a mindfulness-based programme to develop focus, increase productivity and reduce stress, through self-leadership and mental training. The training

and knowledge transfer is based heavily on recent research into neuroscience and cognitive psychology and Holly provides the whole of the agricultural community with an opportunity to learn a bit more about this through the workshop series; which you can [view online](#).

Find out more about Focussed Farmers [here](#) or follow [@FocussedFarmers](#) on Twitter.

Helpful Wellbeing Links

If you need help or have queries regarding desktop assessments or anything else related to RSPCA Assured, please do contact us. We have also shared some helpful links on wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis below:

[That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief](#)

[Caring for employee mental health: a coronavirus guide](#)

[The Adaptive Challenge of COVID-19](#)

[Ten things I've learned in a month of working from home](#)

[Managing remote teams so BAU still happens as normal](#)

Best wishes,

RSPCA Assured

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