

NEW ACTIVITIES AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ESCAPES OF FARMED SALMON

Escaped farmed salmon is a major threat to wild salmon stocks. The consequences of issuing new licences for fish farming are raising serious concern especially that the escape situation can worsen. The Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers, Norwegian Salmon Rivers og World Wildlife Fund - Norway jointly demand increased efforts to fight fish farm escapes:

- Fishery and Environment Authorities must secure a wide spread and continuing surveillance of escaped fish and their mixing with spawning wild salmon. Limits and borderline values must be established for when wild salmon stocks are threatened by escaped salmon so that action can be taken.
- Escapes must be deemed unlawful and punishment for escapes must be made more severe.
- A borderline value of 5% must be implemented with regards to farmed salmon in Norwegian rivers to initiate action against fish farms and the removal of escaped fish.
- Compulsory tagging of farmed fish must be introduced to enable the identification of the fish farm from which fish escape.
- There is a need to develop and intensify research with regards to sterile farmed salmon.
- In depth consequential analysis must be introduced to assess the possibility of enclosed fish pens in the sea, and land based pens particularly in areas where the environmental damage is potentially high risk.
- The exclusion of giant pens must be considered as these pens can result in catastrophic escapes of fish.



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Escaped villain

- Deteriorating wild salmon stocks



FARMED SALMON ARE NOT PART OF NATURE

Large numbers of farmed salmon escape from their pens every year. The annual average number of escapes during 2004 – 2008 was more than 500,000 fish. Escaped salmon and trout are threatening the wild salmon in many ways. In the sea the escaped salmon spread sea lice to wild salmon and smolt. In the rivers, the farmed

salmon mingle with wild salmon and participate in the spawning season. The offspring have reduced survival ability. If this is allowed to happen year after year the result will be a much diluted wild salmon stock. Additionally, farmed salmon have a tendency to destroy spawning redds after spawning with wild salmon.

GENETIC GARBAGE

Wild salmon have for generations adapted to the conditions where they hatched and developed into smolt. The stocks from different rivers have developed specific facilities to suit their river. Farmed salmon however, are genetically different after several decades of inbreeding. Mixing farmed salmon with wild salmon stock will over time lead to diluted stock quality with less ability to adapt to severe river conditions. The result is that fewer fry, parr and smolt develop – weakening wild salmon stocks.

The worst scenario is the extinction of the unique genetic substance the wild salmon carry.

Farmed salmon represent on average 15% of the total numbers of salmon in Norwegian rivers. This is three times the amount scientists accept as a maximum level.

Escaped farmed salmon in Norwegian salmon rivers is genetic garbage to wild salmon stocks.

ESCAPED ALTHOUGH NOT CONVICTED

A single fish farm aqua pen can contain more than 0.5 million salmon. The total run of 'ready to spawn' wild salmon to Norway every year is between 0.5 and 1.0 million. Even one single escape from a farmed salmon pen can cause dire consequences for wild salmon stocks in an area.

The official statistic for escaped farmed salmon is not accurate enough and does not give a full picture of the situation. There are also indications that considerable numbers of escaped salmon are not

reported. Very few escapes are investigated and very few fish farmers are convicted after an escape of fish. Escaped farmed salmon contaminate nature, and although illegal, escapes are being sanctioned through lack of retributive action.

Fisheries authorities have begun a determined action against escapes, named 'Vision Zero tolerance'. In 2008, the number of escapes of salmon and trout fell but there is still some way to go before 'Vision Zero tolerance' is achieved.

*Today's escape levels cause
genetic garbage of
the wild salmon
stocks*

