

The Fish Health Inspectorate

The Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI), based at CEFAS Weymouth, is responsible principally for the implementation of the statutory fish and shellfish health controls in England and Wales, on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The FHI works to national legislation that provides internal disease controls and import legislation applicable to non-EU countries. The legislation also implements the EU fish and shellfish health regimes as laid down in Directive 91/67 EEC and related Directives and Decisions.



The major areas of the Inspectorate's work are:

Farm registration and inspection:

All fish and shellfish farms in England and Wales are registered, and subject to inspection by the FHI according to the requirements of 91/67 EEC. Farm inspections incorporate; checks on movement and mortality records, in addition to the clinical and post mortem monitoring of stock health status. The FHI is also contracted to monitor veterinary medicine use and animal welfare on farms, and the keeping of certain non-native fish species. As a consequence it is increasingly becoming the single point of contact between fish farms and the various government agencies that have a requirement to monitor their activities.



Disease investigation:

Samples for disease diagnosis are taken from farm sites according to EU requirements, and on suspicion of the presence of any notifiable disease. The FHI also investigates mortalities in wild fish populations, in stocked fishery waters and in the ornamental fish trade, to screen for notifiable, new and emergent diseases.

Import and export controls:

The Fish Health Inspectorate carry out appropriate checks on imports from within the EU to ensure that they comply with the standards required for imports to an approved zone. Senior Inspectors liaise with Defra and their counterparts in other EU Member States to resolve any issues arising regarding the status of existing or new farms wishing to export to Great Britain.

All imports from third countries to GB must be made under licence. The Fish Health Inspectorate issues such import licences. Details of exporting farms are checked by FHI staff prior to the issue of licences, when necessary, with the Official Service in the country of origin.

All imported fish and shellfish are subject to programmes of inspection and sampling on entry to GB.

The Inspectorate are responsible for the provision of movement documents and health certificates required for fish and shellfish exports from England and Wales. Inspectors carry out necessary site and stock inspections required in support of such documents.

Controls and Enforcement:

The FHI is responsible for the implementation of formal disease controls during any disease outbreak, and for any eradication programme. It also has enforcement responsibilities in respect of breaches of legislation, most notably in respect of illegal fish imports.



Advice and Legislation:

The FHI provides advice on fish health rules and on the control of fish diseases to the industry and public. It also provides policy advice to Defra on the development, and implementation of national and international fish health rules, disease diagnosis, and emerging disease threats. The FHI acts in a consultant role on fish health legislation, inspection and disease testing to other government and non-governmental bodies, where such action promotes the maintenance and improvement of fish health status in Great Britain, the EU or its potential trade partners.



Further details of the work of the Fish Health Inspectorate can be found at www.cefasc.co.uk and practical aspects of their work are on www.efishbusiness.com