CEFAS
The Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science

IMPORT CHECKS

Statutory Document Requirement

Routine Monitoring of Imports at Ports of Entry

View of arrival and departure areas at port of Dover.

Inspection and Disease Screening Imports at Destination

Inspection of imported fish at destination in UK.

Imported fish in Border Inspection Post at Heathrow Airport.

Offenders Prosecuted

And about time too

Fish smugglers face heftier fines in big clampdown

By Gary Newman

ILLEGAL importers of fish face heavier fines or even prison under a Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries clampdown.

After years in which fines have been so low as to make the risk worthwhile, MAFF will be pressing courts to view the offence more seriously and for the £5,000 maximum fine plus costs to be imposed.

One bonus is that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in the Channel ports are already searching more vehicles than ever in a bid to catch smugglers of illegal immigrants or tobacco.

They will inevitably come across consignments of fish, and contact MAFF's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

CEFAS investigating inspector Steve Macdmant explained: 'We respond to specific circumstances, and the only grounds we can stop and search someone on are if we've had a tip-off.

"Not many people get caught, and it is the same few bringing them in all the time. We know who they are, where the fish have come from and where they're going. But we have to catch them doing it,' he revealed.

Last year someone was fined a total of £8,000 including costs for bringing in five fish, but this could run into tens of thousands of pounds costs and we will apply for as much as we can get.

"They could even get a prison sentence if we can prove they have been doing it long-term as a business. There are other issues such as tax evasion to take into consideration.

"There is now far more determination to get a grip on this situation and we'll catch these people in the end.

"If we manage to trace the fish from the port to the water and see them being stocked then we could shut the water down,' concluded Steve.

A source in the fisheries business, who declined to be named for fear of reprisals, confirmed: 'People used to get fined £500 if they got caught, but now I've heard rumours of them getting done for £8,000 and it is no longer worthwhile.

"There is still a market for these fish. A well-known fish dealing family has been offering a pair of upper thirties for £10,000,' he added.

RMC Angling boss Ian Welch said: 'I'm very much against the illegal trade and the more that MAFF do the better.

"Historically, fish smuggling has been thought of as neither here nor there by judges. Hopefully this will change and the higher the fines the better. It will be nice to see MAFF baring their teeth and flexing their muscles.'

English Carp Heritage Organisation founder Ian Chillcott also welcomed the clampdown. 'It's wonderful to see that they are going after people and dishing out punishments worthy of the crime,' said the expatriotopper.

■ Anyone with any information about illegal imports should contact CEFAS on 01305 206681.

Imported fish seized in CEFAS operation

Press Release from MAFF
Dated 4th May 2001

Inspectors from MAFF's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) have reported the owner of a southern-based company dealing in ornamental fish for the alleged offence of illegally importing fish into the UK.

A one ton consignment of mixed ornamental fish from Italy was intercepted by inspectors based at Weymouth in Dorset on Thursday evening following a late night operation conducted as part of the Ministry's ongoing effort to prevent potentially diseased fish from entering the country.

All live fish coming into the UK must be accompanied by a health certificate signed by a veterinary inspector in the country of origin.

CEFAS warns that people who import fish illegally risk prosecution and heavy fines in addition to losing the fish.

Fine after attempt to import fish

Consignments - Isolated - Returned -Slaughtered

Interception of Suspected Illegal Imports at Port of Entry

Compulsory slaughter of an Illegal consignment of fish,

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