



Canadian Veterinary
Medical Association
Association canadienne
des médecins vétérinaires

September 20, 2024

Honourable Diane Lebouthillier,
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

200 Kent St
Station 15N100
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Email: diane.lebouthillier@parl.gc.ca

Subject: The Government of Canada announcement in June 2024 regarding transition away from open net-pen salmon aquaculture in coastal British Columbia.

Dear Minister,

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) applauds Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for its stated commitment to help “to ensure healthy and sustainable aquatic ecosystems through habitat protection and sound science”. DFO’s work is critical to support environmental sustainability including by way of well-managed aquaculture systems that contribute greatly to future Canada’s economic prosperity with a safe and secure food supply.

Given DFO's emphasis on utilizing sound science to fulfill its mandate, we are concerned about the recent decision announced on June 19, 2024, to ban open net-pen salmon aquaculture in British Columbia's coastal waters by June 30, 2029. We are particularly concerned that this decision does not appear to align with the scientific assessments conducted by DFO. We believe that this action may have substantial implications not only for British Columbia, but also for the erosion of science-based decision-making in other regions in Canada and across other animal sectors.

The CVMA speaks for over 15,000 licensed veterinarians providing essential care to millions of animals, supporting public health, food safety, and animal welfare across Canada. CVMA and its members develop and advocate for science and evidence-based policies in the areas of animal health and welfare for both terrestrial and aquatic animals. As an organization that is committed to One Health, the CVMA works in close association with professionals across the public health, veterinary public health, food safety and security, and environmental sectors. Our veterinarians work as private general practitioners, specialists, researchers, educators, and public servants. CVMA members include licensed veterinarians who are experts in aquatic animal health and welfare in many areas in Canada, including BC.



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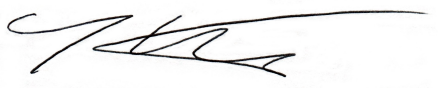
Veterinary experts in salmon population health and fish diseases have participated in numerous government-led scientific assessment processes. They have stated their concerns that science does not support the proposed ban. Similar opinions have been echoed by federal scientists.

The CVMA recognizes the contentious nature of this issue, however, the CVMA also supports and promotes firm commitment to evidence-based decision-making in the development of food animal production policies. We recommend pausing the proposed ban and re-engaging with the scientific community, including veterinarians, who are experts in salmon population health. This will ensure that the methods used to investigate the interaction between wild and farmed salmon health are properly validated and evaluated according to rigorous scientific standards.

We are ready to assist in identifying qualified veterinary subject matter experts regarding the proposed ban of open net-pen salmon aquaculture in British Columbia's coastal waters and any other future reviews.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dr. Timothy Arthur, DVM
President, CVMA

