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23 November 2015

**RSPCA Assured Seal Killers
- Public Pledge to Stop Certifying Seal-Killing Salmon Farms?**

Further to GAAIA's [letter of 30 August 2015](#) and [letter of July 2012](#), will the RSPCA finally pledge to stop certifying seal-killing salmon farms?

As GAAIA's [letter of July 2012](#) stated:

"The RSPCA's support for seal killing is nothing short of shameful. How can the RSPCA certify salmon farms as welfare-friendly under the Freedom Food scheme when seals are being shot as a first not last resort?"

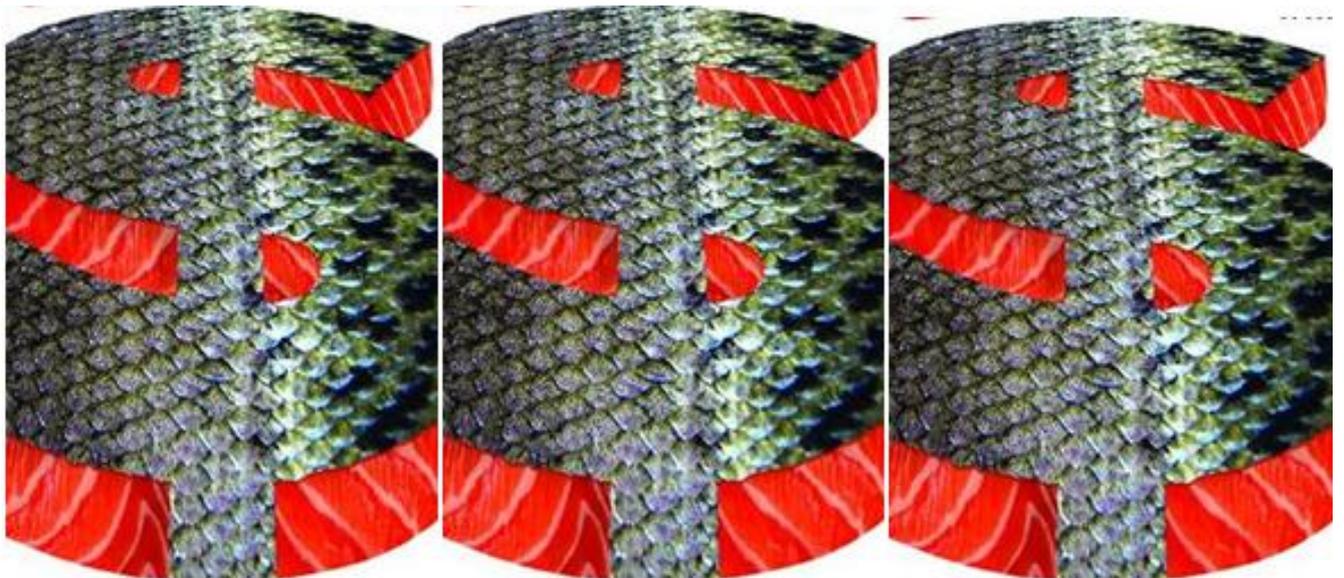
Over three years later and the slaughter of seals on Scottish salmon farms continues - the only thing that has changed is that [Freedom Food](#) has been re-branded as [RSPCA Assured](#).



Given RSPCA Assured's 'shoot-to-kill' policy on salmon farms, the RSPCA should be renamed the Royal Seal Culling Association!



The R\$PCA has shamefully sacrificed animal protection at the altar of commercial profit. It is understood that each salmon farm certified under the R\$PCA Assured scheme pays several thousand pounds therefore raking in hundreds of thousands of pounds for the R\$PCA!



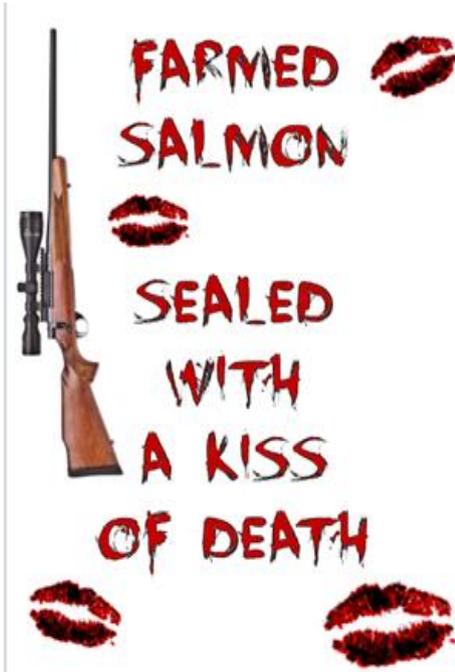
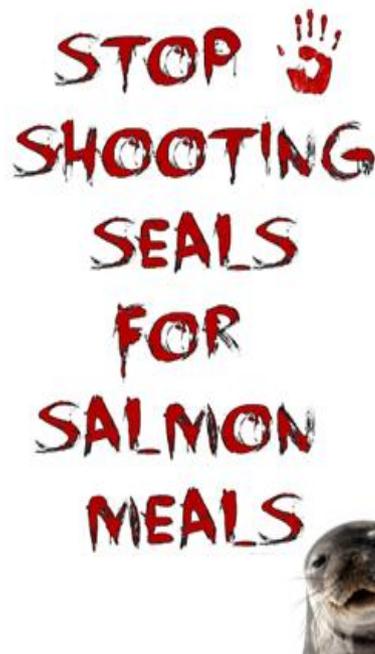
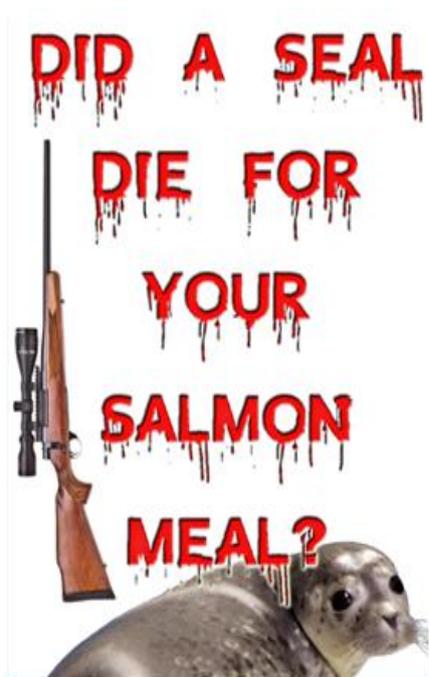
Ker-ching - that's the sounds of the RSPCA's cash register as dozens of Scottish salmon farms have rushed to be certified as 'welfare-friendly' since 2002. In fact, over 70% of Scottish

farmed salmon is now certified as "welfare-friendly" via the RSPCA Assured scheme. Since there were 260 salmon farms in 2014 (the latest [government survey available](#)) that could mean over 180 RSPCA Assured salmon farms in Scotland.

Indeed, how many salmon farms are currently certified under the RSPCA Assured scheme? And how much blood money does the RSPCA receive annually from the Scottish salmon farming industry?



How many seals were killed at RSPCA Assured salmon farms in 2012, 2013, 2014 and thus far during 2015? The public surely has a right to know if a seal died for their salmon meal?



The RSPCA's shoot-to-kill policy runs counter to public opinion with an opinion poll conducted in October 2015 by Metro [reporting](#) 87% of people against the killing of seals:

METRO

NEWS... BUT NOT AS
66.2M SHARES

HOME NEWS SPORT ENTERTAINMENT LIFESTYLE MORE

UK WORLD WEIRD TECH

RSPCA upsets people by saying seal shooting is okay



Ashritha Nagesh for Metro.co.uk Sunday 11 Oct 2015 12:04 pm

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Fish farmers are allowed to shoot seals (Picture: AFP/Getty Images)

The RSPCA is under fire for allowing fish farmers to shoot seals.



A [petition](#) calling on the RSPCA to stop the killing of seals on salmon farms now has over 2,700 signatures:

change.org Start a petition Browse Search Don Staniford

Petitioning RSPCA and 1 other

RSPCA: End your support for the killing of Scottish Seals.

 **Katie Nethercoat** Beverley, United Kingdom



Share this petition
2,723 supporters
2,277 needed to reach 5,000

Share on Facebook

Add a personal message (optional)

 RSPCA, SPCA: RSPCA: End your support for the killing of Scottish Seals.

The RSPCA's shoot-to-kill policy is indefensible. ITV News [reported](#) in October 2015:

The RSPCA defended its new standards, which continue to permit the salmon industry to shoot seals.

Jeremy Cooper, chief executive of RSPCA Assured, explained its position:



That's infuriated John Robins from the Saves Our Seals campaign group. He told me that he has fought ten years to get the RSPCA to join calls for a ban on killing seals.

He says it is unacceptable that not every salmon producer has installed anti-predator nets, which are a non-lethal alternative to the shootings.

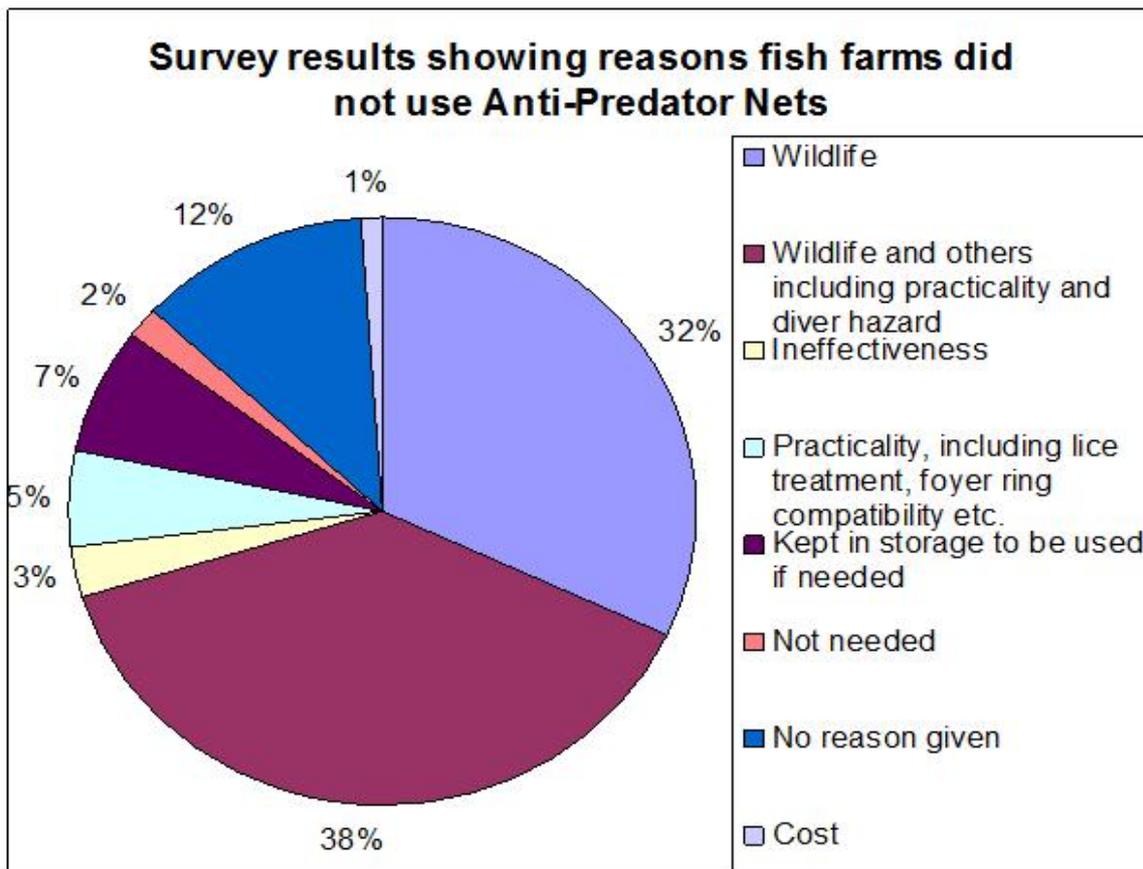
In particular, how can the RSPCA seriously refer to shooting seals as a "last resort" when the vast majority of salmon farms do not even have anti-predator nets or seal blinds installed?

As GAAIA's [letter of 30 August 2015](#) stated:

"Please also note that a [Scottish Government survey in 2011/2012](#) revealed that 87% of salmon farms in Scotland do not even use predator nets - belying the salmon farming industry's claim that only shoot seals as a "last resort":

2011/12 Survey - Anti-Predator Nets

A total of 13% of fish farms actively use anti-predator nets and a further 7% have anti-predator nets in storage, making 20% in total (36 out of 175 responses). A number of reasons were offered for not using such nets but the most significant by far at 70% was related either solely or partly to possible impacts on wildlife. It should be noted that properly installed and maintained high-tension seal exclusion nets should not harm seals or other marine mammals. However this requires employing extra trained staff and regular net maintenance and cleaning which costs money and eats into profit margins.



Read more via "[Fish Farms in Shooting Seals Row](#)" and "[Scottish Salmon's Lethal Seal of Disapproval - 87% of farms fails to install predator exclusion nets](#)"

How many RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food certified salmon farms use predator nets?"

Here's the relevant [sections of the RSPCA's standards](#) sanctioning seal-killing including the risible reference to 'last resort':

HP 7.14 The producer must be able to demonstrate to the Freedom Food Assessor or the RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer that all of the procedures leading up to the point of last resort have been mobilised.

i The repeated shooting of seals without having deployed all of the measures leading to a last resort scenario, will result in the site being suspended from the scheme pending further investigation.

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- HP 7.15** There must be positive identification that a seal is causing the problem of fish mortality, or is the cause of compromised fish welfare.
- HP 7.16 *** The humane dispatch of any seal must only be undertaken as a last resort in order to protect the welfare of the fish and where all non-lethal methods have failed to do so.
- HP 7.17 *** Before the humane culling of seals as a last resort can be considered, the following must have been implemented:
- a) nets are adequately tensioned
 - b) top nets secured to deny ingress by predators into the enclosure
 - c) dead fish have been regularly removed
 - d) where appropriate, ADDs/ASDs have been mobilised and are working properly
 - e) predator nets/curtains/screens have been deployed where it is appropriate to do so.
- HP 7.18 *** The producer must be able to demonstrate to the Freedom Food Assessor or the RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer, that all of the steps leading up to a last resort scenario have been implemented.
- HP 7.19 *** Where it becomes necessary to humanely dispatch a seal as a last resort, the following records must be kept:
- a) names of all persons with valid firearms certificates who are deemed competent to perform the task
 - b) details of any bullets used and returned in the ammunition register
 - c) details of any animal that has been shot, including:
 - i) the species
 - ii) the time and date of dispatch
 - iii) the location
 - iv) the reason for the shooting
 - v) the number of fish killed before resorting to a lethal method
 - vi) the number of fish on site.

- HP 7.19.1*** In the case of members of the Freedom Food scheme, all the details in HP 7.19 relating to seal shootings must be reported to the Freedom Food office, within 72 hours.
- HP 7.20** All attempts must be made to recover the body of the animal that has been shot and it must be recorded as to whether or not the body was recovered.
- HP 7.21** Any carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with the law.
- HP 7.22** Seals must not be shot outside the Crown Estate lease area.
- HP 7.23** After every shooting incident, a review of all predator exclusion procedures must be undertaken and records kept of such reviews.

In June 2015, the RSPCA made "[key changes](#)" but shamefully maintained a shoot-to-kill policy on seals:

June 2015

Key¹ changes to the RSPCA welfare standards for farmed Atlantic salmon

As part of the on-going process of reviewing the welfare standards, they have now been amended and updated, and include the addition of new standards and guidance. All the amendments to the current version of the [RSPCA welfare standards for farmed Atlantic salmon](#), dated October 2012, were sent to Freedom Food members on 9th June 2015 and these changes will come into force on 9th September 2015, unless otherwise stated by a standard. This document provides further information on the rationale underpinning the decision/s for making key amendments to the standards.

| Husbandry Practices | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Current standard | New/Amended standard | Reason for change and further information |
| | New standard HP 7.16 The humane dispatch of any seal must only be undertaken as a last resort in order to protect the welfare of the fish and where all non-lethal methods have failed to do so. | It was felt to be necessary to make the previous information box into a standard, so that the last resort scenario is explicit within the main body of the document. |
| | New standard HP 7.17 Before the humane culling of seals as a last resort can be considered, the following must have been implemented: a) nets are adequately tensioned b) top nets secured to deny ingress by predators into the enclosure c) dead fish have been regularly removed d) where appropriate, ADDs/ASDs have been mobilised and are working properly e) predator nets/curtains/screens have been deployed where it is appropriate to do so. | This has now been elevated into a standard, from its previous status as an information box. This defines the last resort scenario, so that there can be no doubt as to what it means. |
| | New standard HP 7.18 The producer must be able to demonstrate to the Freedom Food Assessor or the RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer, that all of the steps leading up to a last resort scenario have been implemented. | This will provide verification that all of the steps have been taken. |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Current standard HP 6.16 Where it becomes necessary to humanely dispatch a seal, the following records must be kept:</p> <p>a) names of all persons with valid firearms certificates who are deemed competent to perform the task</p> <p>b) details of any bullets used and returned in the ammunition register</p> <p>c) details of any animal that has been shot, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the species • the time and date of dispatch • the location • the reason for the shooting. | <p>Amended standard HP 7.19 Where it becomes necessary to humanely dispatch a seal as a last resort, the following records must be kept:</p> <p>a) names of all persons with valid firearms certificates who are deemed competent to perform the task</p> <p>b) details of any bullets used and returned in the ammunition register</p> <p>c) details of any animal that has been shot, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the species ii) the time and date of dispatch iii) the location iv) the reason for the shooting v) the number of fish killed before resorting to a lethal method vi) the number of fish on site. | <p>The fish are never mentioned in many of the reports which appear about seal shooting. The addition of including the number of fish involved in seal attacks helps to provide important information regarding the facts surrounding this issue.</p> |
| | <p>New Standard HP 7.19.1 In the case of members of the Freedom Food scheme, all the details in HP 7.19 relating to seal shootings must be reported to the Freedom Food office, within 72 hours.</p> | <p>This used to be a voluntary requirement. It is now mandatory and will help to ensure that information relating to this important issue is provided to the scheme in a consistent and timely manner.</p> |

Download as a PDF [online here](#)

The trigger-happy stance of the RSPCA is unsurprising given the make-up of their [technical advisory group](#) which includes a who's who of salmon farming's biggest seal killers:

RSPCA farmed salmon standards technical advisory groups

Members of the RSPCA Salmon (Freshwater) Standards Technical Advisory Group (**FW**) and RSPCA Salmon (Seawater) Standards Technical Advisory Group (**SW**) are selected on the basis of the specific expertise they bring to the groups in different areas of farmed salmon care. Members include:

- John Avizienius (RSPCA farmed salmon specialist) **FW and SW**
- Alasdair MacDonald (Scottish Salmon) **FW**
- Andy Young (Cooke Aquaculture) **FW and SW**
- Chris Findlay (Fish Vet Group) **FW and SW**
- Dave Danson (Landcatch) **FW**
- David Cockerill (Marine Harvest) **SW**
- David Roadknight (Lochduart) **FW**
- George Whyte (Kintail Hatchery) **FW**
- Gilpin Bradley (Wester Ross Salmon) **FW and SW**
- Grant Cumming (Hjaltland Seafarms Ltd) **SW**
- Hugh Murray (Migdale Smolt Ltd) **FW**
- Hugh Richards (Wester Ross Salmon) **FW and SW**
- Ian Armstrong (Partners in Welfare) **FW and SW**
- John Barrington (Scottish Sea Farms) **FW and SW**
- John Richmond (Marine Harvest Scotland) **FW**
- Jon Walden (Hjaltland Seafarms Ltd) **FW**
- Kim Thomas (Scottish Salmon) **FW and SW**
- Michelle Johnson (Cooke Aquaculture) **FW and SW**
- Nick Joy (Lochduart) **FW and SW**
- Paul Armstrong/Wilson (Solway Transport) **FW**
- Paul Irving (Meridian Salmon) **FW**
- Rob Murray (Howietoun) **FW**
- A technical/field operations representative of Freedom Food Ltd **FW and SW**
- A representative of RSPCA field staff (Farm Livestock Officers) who monitor Freedom Food scheme members **FW and SW**

Why does the RSPCA not include any welfare group representatives such as Compassion In World Farming, Seal Protection Action Group or Save Our Seals Fund on the technical advisory group?

The RSPCA's stance in support of killing seals at salmon farms in Scotland seems completely out of kilter with the RSPCA's mandate of animal welfare. Why does the RSPCA rescue seals in Norfolk, [for example](#), when it is sponsoring their slaughter in Scotland?



And isn't it hypocritical in the extreme for the RSPCA to use [cute images of seals to raise money and raise your public profile](#) when you are promoting the killing of seals at salmon farms in Scotland?



Perhaps the RSPCA Board of Directors and management team at RSPCA Assured need a reminder of the real sordid story on seals?

Here's photos of dead seals killed near Marine Harvest's salmon farm in Loch Alsh:



Download high res image [online here](#)



Download image [online here](#)



Download high res image [online here](#)



Download image [online here](#)



Download image [online here](#)

Surely your founders Arthur Broome and William Wilberforce are turning in their graves at how the RSPCA has sacrificed its soul at the altar of trigger-happy salmon farming companies?



A public pledge to end the killing of seals by **9 December 2015** would be much appreciated so we can avoid targeting your offices. If you are interested in issuing a joint statement

publicising your commitment to ending the slaughter of seals at salmon farms please let me know.

If you choose to continue to sponsor seal slaughter across Scotland and have any security concerns regarding forthcoming protests please do not hesitate to contact me. GAAIA has a policy of peaceful protest and liaison with the police.

If we did dump bloody seal corpses in front of your offices then we would merely consider it a Good Samaritan act of returning lost property or a lost puppy. You could even use the corpses for education purposes and show visiting school children how RSPCA Assured value the £££££s revenue from salmon farmers ahead of marine life in Scotland.

Please pass this letter onto the RSPCA's Board of Directors, RSPCA Assured staff and members of the RSPCA Salmon (Seawater) Standards Technical Advisory Group. Please also read the blog "[RSPCA Assured Seal Killers!](#)"

Yours sincerely,

Don Staniford

Director of the [Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#)

Contact: dstaniford@gaaia.org

Cc: Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals