



FISHING & MAR

Steps taken to reduce number of seals killed at isles sites

Scottish government figures have showed that Shetland has been one of the worst areas in Scotland for shooting seals in the vicinity of salmon farms.

The most killing took place at East Voe Laxfirth, where Grieg Seafood Hjaltland shot 24 seals between February 2013 and August 2014.

The same company also shot six seals in South Voe, Gletness in this period.

Other Shetland companies to shoot seals included Balta Island Seafare, which shot seven, and Scottish Seafarms, which shot six at Bellister, five at Loura Voe and four at Grunna Voe.

However, the situation is improving with fewer seals being shot thanks to new nets to protect salmon, according to Grieg Seafood Hjaltland production manager Grant Cumming.

He said only one grey seal had been shot in January – the only one to be shot this year.

This drop in numbers has been due to the installation of plastic “econets”, which Mr Cumming likened to a security fence, attached to the handrail of the pen and weighted down with heavy chain.

He said: “From shooting too many seals we’ve gone to shooting nothing.”

Twenty-six of these new econets, costing £40,000 each, have been installed in pens in the worst affected areas of Laxfirth and sites closest to Lerwick Harbour.

Near the harbour, Mr Cumming said, the seals were almost tame and “looked upon us as a Macdonald’s drive-through for breakfast”.

Previously the seals could push the nets in and reach the salmon,

but with the plastic nets this was not possible.

Mr Cumming said: “It’s a good news story. We have been investing heavily to stop shooting. We have invested £1million each year in the last two years.

“We realise shooting seals is very bad PR (public relations) and not something our guys like doing.”

However, unlike Grieg Seafood Hjaltland, which employs 250 people and is responsible for 50 per cent of Shetland production, not all salmon farms have invested in the econets,

Don Staniford, director of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAILA), said: “Shetland’s trigger-happy salmon farmers are bringing shame to the Scottish salmon farming industry.

“Bullets are cheap and Shetland farmed salmon is cheap and nasty. The price for seal-friendly farmed salmon is predator nets and that could be £1 million per farm.”

Mr Staniford applauded Grieg Seafood Hjaltland’s installation of econets, but acknowledged they were very expensive.

He added: “A single salmon farm in Shetland spent over £1million on [new] predator nets at a 26-cage farm.

“If you assume (based upon a Scottish government survey in 2011/2012) that 87 per cent of the industry do not use these predator nets and there are 143 active salmon farms (based on the latest Scottish government annual fish farm survey) then it would cost well over £100 million for the entire Scottish salmon farming industry to install predator nets.”



Seeing double! A relief lifeboat

Fare barg

One of the barges that visited house Petrofac workers on the isles.

The *Kalmar*, which was berthed in Lerwick in 2013, first at the Albert Pier then at Holmsgarth, was on Monday night.

That leaves two other vessels left in the port – the *Vitesse* and the *Bibby Stenhouse*.

Lerwick Port Authority executive Sandra Laurson said the *Kalmar* had been visited last month. The barge, she said, was destined for Poland and was by the tug *Viking* which was from Delfzijl in the Netherlands.

Monday also saw the

Man let out on bail