

All SSF farms have seal defence nets installed. Wyre farm infrastructure includes nets designed to protect against seal ingress. SSF continue to investigate and trial latest available infrastructure and practices for seal management.

Wyre Infrastructure: Given the increased level of seal interest in the farm we were (and are) in the process of replacing some of these nets with the latest generation seal defence netting. This has led to the very unusual action of moving fish between pens within the farm to allow this additional infrastructure upgrade to occur. (noting that, wherever possible, handling of fish is an action we minimise on the ground of fish welfare)

Following an inspection of the nets on the first day of seal ingress to the pen, with no damage to our sidenet or top nets found, we concluded that the seals had entered over the handrail at the junction with the side net and top net area.

Context Note: Weather conditions at the farm increased risks of fish escape from routine seal egress practices we have successfully adopted across our farming estate. Winds and related choppy waters, mean that sidewalls can only be let down to encourage egress of a seal under supervision, when farmers are on-site and conditions can support the safe lowering of side netting. We have legal obligations in respect to preventing fish escapes and must operate to ensure that this does not occur.

In addition, for our temporary haul outs used to support seal welfare, we cannot leave a temporary structure within the pen unsupervised due to the added risk of damage & integrity to infrastructure which could result in an occurrence of fish escape.

Photographs: No photographs were taken during this incident. The attached photograph is for reference and is the haul-out and lowered side wall netting used at the Wyre site with proven success in other situations.

Timeline:

08/10/22/

- 3 seals observed in cage 12 during site checks 0830
- Side netting let down in two places to allow egress 0830-0930
- 2 seals left, one would not leave
- Divers checked netting for holes – none found. 1100 – onwards (side netting down)
- Seal not scared away by divers.
- Net washing vessel washed cage 12 in the hope noise and activity would coax seal out – unsuccessful. 01330
- No choice but to lace side netting back up at end of shift to prevent further seals joining the one in the cage. 1500

09/10/22

- Bad Weather precluded being on site

10/10/22

- Bad Weather precluded being on site

11/10/22

- Further unsuccessful efforts made to coax seal out of cage. 0830-0930 (Repetition of actions from 8th)
- Side net let down in multiple places. Several attempts made throughout the day. 1130-1230, 1400-1500
- In pen temporary haul out area provided

12/10/22

- As above.

13/10/22

- As Above. Contacted Independent Vet to discuss the situation and agreed site visit at earliest opportunity to assess the situation.

14/10/22

- As above.
- Vet and Marksman attended 1500 hours.
- Virtual internal meeting to question & understand position held at 1515 hours, with independent Vet in attendance.
- Senior Management, following Vet advice, confirmed that the action to alleviate suffering through euthanising was required.
- Seal euthanised by qualified firearms licence holder. 1530-1630
- Seal carcase was recovered and stored at SSF secure facility.
- SSF formally notified Marine Scotland, APHA, CVO and Police Scotland via email of the action.

