

3rd September 2012

Marine Amoeba

There are many types of marine amoeba which now colonise our marine environments as a result of changes to our climate. These are opportunist single-cell organisms which take advantage of favourable environmental conditions to spread across the ocean on host species such as fish.

Amoeba can affect the fish gills and this reduces the amount of oxygen a fish can take in. Amoebic Gill Disease (AGD) is a condition which affects many types of marine fish across the world, including Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). AGD has been found on farmed salmon species across the world, most notably Tasmania, Chile and more recently France and Ireland. It is also commonly found in other wild fish species such as Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*).

In 2012 there has been a greater presence in Scottish waters, probably due to the changing climate. This may have been exacerbated by lower rainfall in the normally high rainfall regions in the West of Scotland along with higher salinity levels in the sea. Farmers are managing the problem by washing the gill with either fresh water or *hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) and the industry is working to develop methods to further reduce its impact in Scotland.

This is a fish husbandry matter with no effect on food safety or food quality.

*hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) is an oxidising agent which is used to clean the amoeba from the gills and when diluted into the sea changes to become water and oxygen which has no effect on the marine environment.