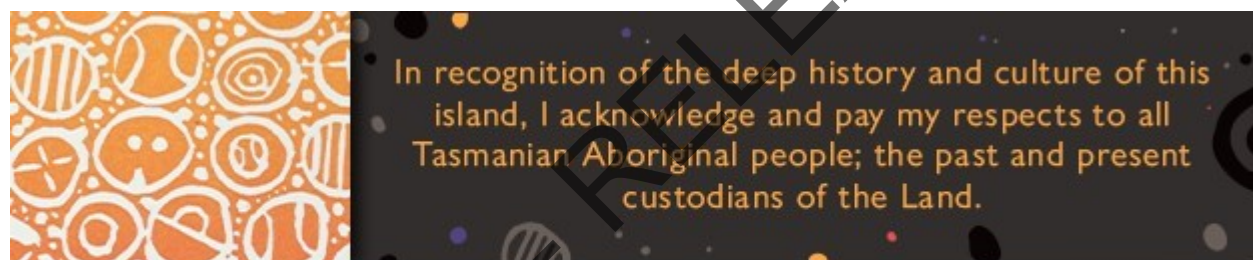


From: Murdoch, Catherine
Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2025 10:01 PM
To: Clarke, Mandy; Round, Allison; Jacobi, Jason
Cc: Cantwell, Tahlia; Marriner, Kristin
Subject: RE: F&Q on Florfenicol

Yes thank you. Not sure where the information on the last dot point is from but the final and any interim monitoring report submitted to the Director will be made publicly available on the EPA website following review and acceptance. This is the same as OTC monitoring results.

Catherine Murdoch | Chief Executive Officer
Environment Protection Authority
Henty House Launceston TAS 7250
M: [REDACTED]
E: Catherine.Murdoch@epa.tas.gov.au
W: www.epa.tas.gov.au



From: Clarke, Mandy
Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2025 9:58 PM
To: Round, Allison ; Murdoch, Catherine ; Jacobi, Jason
Cc: Cantwell, Tahlia ; Marriner, Kristin
Subject: RE: F&Q on Florfenicol

Thank you

From: Round, Allison <Allison.Round@nre.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2025 8:26 PM
To: Clarke, Mandy <Mandy.Clarke@nre.tas.gov.au>; Murdoch, Catherine <Catherine.Murdoch@epa.tas.gov.au>; Jacobi, Jason <Jason.Jacobi@nre.tas.gov.au>
Cc: Cantwell, Tahlia <Tahlia.Cantwell@nre.tas.gov.au>; Marriner, Kristin <Kristin.Marriner@nre.tas.gov.au>
Subject: RE: F&Q on Florfenicol

Thanks.

I'd asked Gina to prepare a template for us last week in case we needed something for Fact Sheets, etc.

Please see attached. See you in the morning.

Thanks, Allison

From: Clarke, Mandy <Mandy.Clarke@nre.tas.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2025 8:08 PM

To: Cantwell, Tahlia <Tahlia.Cantwell@nre.tas.gov.au>; Round, Allison <Allison.Round@nre.tas.gov.au>; Murdoch, Catherine <Catherine.Murdoch@epa.tas.gov.au>; Jacobi, Jason <Jason.Jacobi@nre.tas.gov.au>

Subject: RE: F&Q on Florfenicol

Slight changes Alision – Jason and Catherine will confirm their approval.

What we know about Florfenicol

• What is Florfenicol?

Florfenicol is an antibiotic that is used in the aquaculture industry globally.

• Has Florfenicol been used elsewhere as a treatment option?

Yes, this antibiotic has not been used in Tasmania in these quantities, it has been widely used in the aquaculture industry around the world.

• What are the known benefits of using Florfenicol over Oxytetracycline which is the current antibiotic being used?

- Effective doses are significantly lower for florfenicol, meaning lower quantities of antibiotic can be administered.
- Florfenicol is highly bioavailable, meaning the vast majority of consumed antibiotic is absorbed by the fish
- Florfenicol is metabolised quickly by the fish, meaning there are low levels of metabolites excreted into the waterways.
- Florfenicol does not adsorb as strongly to sediments, nor does it persist for as long in sediments
- Florfenicol displays low toxicity to aquatic organisms
- Despite widespread Florfenicol use in Chile, antibiotic resistance has not developed in *P. salmonis* as a result of this use.

• What is Florfenicol being used to treat?

- Florfenicol is being used to treat *Piscirickettsia salmonis*, however this is not a new outbreak.

• Does Florfenicol have any impacts on human health?

Our understanding to date is the antibiotic presents a low risk to human however Department of Health are undertaking further assessments.

• **Is it safe to eat fish caught in the area during the a treatment period?**

The Department of Health are currently undertaking assessments.

• **What risks will there be to our waterways from the use of Florfenicol?**

The advice and research received from the use of this antibiotic in the aquaculture industry globally is that the risks are low, however the EPA and the DoH to closely monitor any impacts.

• **Will the use of this antibiotic cause algal blooms?**

This is not likely. Algal blooms are multi-factorial and have lots of contributing factors such as marine heatwaves, run off etc.

• **Will the dosage and impacts of this new antibiotic be disclosed?**

This is being provided to EPA and NRE Tas as commercial in confidence, however we can advise that dosage will be consistent with the published dose rates of this antibiotic use in the aquaculture industry globally.

From: Cantwell, Tahlia <Tahlia.Cantwell@nre.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2025 7:57 PM
To: Clarke, Mandy <Mandy.Clarke@nre.tas.gov.au>; Round, Allison <Allison.Round@nre.tas.gov.au>
Cc: Jacobi, Jason <Jason.Jacobi@nre.tas.gov.au>
Subject: Re: F&Q on Florfenicol

I'll be on deck early tomorrow to get packs printed and ready for the briefing.

Allison and Mandy please let know if you need me to format.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Clarke, Mandy <Mandy.Clarke@nre.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, August 14, 2025 7:42:58 PM
To: Round, Allison <Allison.Round@nre.tas.gov.au>
Cc: Jacobi, Jason <Jason.Jacobi@nre.tas.gov.au>; Cantwell, Tahlia <Tahlia.Cantwell@nre.tas.gov.au>
Subject: F&Q on Florfenicol

Hi Alison,

I have changed some of the information because the approach has now changed.

Jason will need to clear this information and you will need to format to look professional. Subject to Jason's approval the information needs to be ready for hand out at the 9am Brief.


Thanks

Mandy



Mandy Clarke (*she, her, hers*) | Deputy Secretary
Primary Industry and Water Division
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W: www.nre.tas.gov.au

Delivering a **sustainable Tasmania** .

 In recognition of the deep history and culture of this island, I acknowledge and pay my respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people; the past and present custodians of the land.

RTI - DL - RELEASE - EPA

Subject: MEETING | BRIEFING - PIW Briefing
Location: Committee Room 1
Start: Fri 15/08/2025 9:00 AM
End: Fri 15/08/2025 10:00 AM
Show Time As: Tentative
Recurrence: (none)
Organizer: Pearce, Gavin

Attendance can be either in person or online. If this time and day is not suitable, please advise our office and we will be happy to arrange an alternative briefing.

Friday, August 15, 2025

9:00 AM | (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney | 1 hr

[Start meeting](#)

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Cross-Agency Briefing Salmon Industry Update

Brief Date: Friday 15 August 2025

Time: 9.00 -10.00am

Location: Committee Room 1

Ministerial, Parliamentary member and Legislative Council attendees

- Minister Gavin Pearce MP – Minister for Primary Industries and Water; Rosalie Woodruff MP – Leader of the Greens; Janie Finlay MP; Peter George MP; Carlo di Falco MP; Craig Garland MP; Kristie Johnston MP; David O’Byrne MP; Bec Thomas MLC; Casey Hiscutt MLC; Meg Webb MLC; Tania Rattray MLC; Dean Harriss MLC; Michael Gaffney MLC; Ruth Forrest MLC; Rosemary Armitage MLC;

Department Representatives

Department of Natural Resources and Environment

- Jason Jacobi – Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
- Mandy Clarke – Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water
- Rae Burrows – General Manager Biosecurity Tasmania (On-Line)
- Deborah McSweyn – Acting Chief Veterinary Officer
- Chris Lyall Chief Inspector of Primary Produce Safety (On-Line)
- David Midson – General Manager Marine

Environment Protection Agency – Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Murdoch

Salmon Tasmania – Chief Executive Officer, John Whittington

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions – Minister Gavin Pearce MP
- Overview - Jason Jacobi
- Monitoring Program - Catherine Murdoch
- Industry perspective – John Whittington
- Questions and next steps. (Internal to government and parliamentary members only)

Piscirickettsia salmonis

Information sheet

This information sheet has been prepared from a variety of sources to provide current and unpublished scientific information on *Piscirickettsia salmonis* relevant to Tasmania.

Unfortunately, much of the Australian information available via the internet is outdated. This information sheet focuses on certain topics and does not attempt to describe all aspects of this disease in detail.

Summary

In 2024, collaboration between the Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines and the [Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness \(CSIRO, Geelong\)](#), facilitated advanced genomic analyses of the bacteria which resulted in the isolation of the East Coast strain of the Tasmanian Rickettsia-Like Organism (TRLO-EC) being reclassified as *Piscirickettsia salmonis* (*P. salmonis*). This work was therefore able to determine that *P. salmonis* has in fact been present in Tasmanian east coast waters since at least 2021 and in the south east zone (the 'channel') since 2023 based on samples submitted at those times. This means that this bacterium is naturally occurring in the east and southeast coastal waters and it is no longer regarded as an exotic emergency disease in Tasmania.

The pathogen

P. salmonis is a facultative intracellular, bacterial, epizootic pathogen of salmonids, first identified in Chile in 1989 and later identified in Canada and several European countries (Fryer and Mauel, 1997). This Gram-negative, pleomorphic, coccoid bacterium replicates within membrane-bound cytoplasmic vacuoles in the cells of infected fish (Fryer et al., 1990).

Piscirickettsiosis, the disease caused by *P. salmonis*, is also known as salmon rickettsia syndrome and salmonid rickettsial septicaemia (SRS). There are several type strains –including LF-89 (the most virulent Chilean strain) and EM-90. The Tasmanian *P. salmonis* is most similar to members of the EM-90 genogroup and is closely related to the Tasmanian Rickettsia-Like Organisms.

P. salmonis disease has subsequently been observed in other salmonid species in saltwater (Chinook salmon, Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout and masu salmon) across many parts of the world. It is now known that rickettsia-like organisms affect marine fish over broad host and geographic ranges, acknowledging that many of these species are capable of, or have, marine and freshwater life cycles.

The complete genomic sequence of *P. salmonis* Chile isolate (LF-89T strain) was obtained in 2001 (Valenzuela et al., 2001). LF-89 has also been found in several non-salmonid hosts such as the white sea bass (*Atractoscion nobilis*) and other wild species that are not present in Tasmanian waters.

Piscirickettsia salmonis | Information sheet

The significance of these detections is not known in terms of how the organism survives in the marine environment or the disease impacts on these other non-salmonid species, but *P. salmonis* is not known at present to be a risk to native Tasmanian marine species.

Tasmanian Rickettsia Like Organisms

Since 2001, farmed salmonid fish in Tasmania have been susceptible to infection by Tasmanian Rickettsia-like organisms (TRLOs; Corbeil et al., 2005). TRLOs were considered to be composed of three serovars, with variants linked to one of three geographic regions of Tasmania, the southeast, Macquarie Harbour or Tamar River (Morrison et al., 2016). These three closely related TRLOs are also closely related to *P. salmonis*. TRLO-SE, TRLO-MH and TRLO-TR are now known to form a distinct phylogenomic clade, which most likely represents a novel species of *Piscirickettsia*. It is anticipated that this species will be named when these data are published in the peer-reviewed literature.

Phylogeny

Molecular phylogenetic analysis based on sequencing of the 16S rRNA gene categorised *P. salmonis* in a new family of Piscirickettsiaceae and Genus *Piscirickettsia* within that family and within the class of Gamma (γ)-proteobacteria. Although they belong to different classes, *Piscirickettsia* (Gamma-proteobacteria) is morphologically similar to true *Rickettsia* bacteria (Alpha-proteobacteria). Complete genomic sequences from more strains of *P. salmonis* as well as the TRLOs, will allow the refinement of their phylogeny. It is now further proposed for these TRLO isolates to join the Genus *Piscirickettsia* in the Gamma-proteobacteria.

Ecology – epidemiology

Although it was initially described as obligately intracellular, more recent research has established that *P. salmonis* can survive as both a free-living bacterium in the marine environment and in laboratory settings. In seawater, free-living *P. salmonis* can survive for at least 21 days under the right environmental conditions and is capable of forming viable and mucus-tolerant biofilms on non-living surfaces. Survival is highest at around 5 °C and decreases as temperature increases; almost no survival is observed above 25 °C, but this is also an unfavourable temperature for Atlantic salmon.

Outbreaks usually occur after fish are introduced to saltwater at water temperatures between 12°C and 18°C. This temperature range corresponds to that experienced in salmon leases in Tasmania but the disease here to date is primarily seen in mature fish towards the end of their growth cycle in the marine environment and associated with peak summer water temperatures.

P. salmonis does not appear to be able to survive without a host in freshwater environments as it is readily lysed in freshwater. As such it is unlikely to be a threat to Tasmanian freshwater trout and salmon species. Biosecurity standards are in place to prevent the movement of salmonids from marine to freshwater environments. The impact of *P. salmonis* on the estuarine population of brown trout in Tasmania is difficult to predict but it is expected to be much less than for farmed salmon.

Piscirickettsia salmonis | Information sheet

Human Health

As a marine bacterium *P. salmonis* is a fish pathogen and does not cause disease in people.

The optimum temperature range means that it does not pose a threat to warm-blooded species including humans. It's been shown that there is sub-optimal growth of *P. salmonis* at 29°C (Henriquez et al., 2013) and no growth at 30°C (Mikalsen et al., 2008). Generally advice remains to not handle or consume the dead fish material; avoid activities that will bring you into contact with the material, and wash your hands with soap and water if you do.

With the specific growth requirements for a marine bacterium, *P. salmonis* is a fish pathogen and does not cause human or terrestrial animal disease, or any food safety risk.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of piscirickettsiosis is based on a range of procedures. Presumptive diagnosis is made following clinical and pathological observations. *P. salmonis* is confirmed following histopathological examination, isolation (growth) in tissue culture on solid medium or in liquid medium, combined with identification by dot blot serotyping. Identification of bacteria by mass spectrometric (matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization – time-of-flight; MALDI-TOF) analysis is a key part of the initial clinical diagnostic laboratory processes in Tasmania and across the globe.

In addition, a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique for the rapid identification of the Australian isolate of *P. salmonis* is being developed. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) and analysis of cultured organisms is currently required to confirm the exact strain of bacteria.

Tasmanian timeline

Since 2001, farmed salmonid fish in Tasmania have been susceptible to infection by Tasmanian Rickettsia-like organisms (TRLOs; Corbeil et al., 2005). The initial diagnosis of *P. salmonis* came from whole genome sequencing (WGS) in early 2024. WGS of the Tasmanian collection of 41 TRLO isolates held at the Animal Health Laboratory (AHL), Mount Pleasant, was initially undertaken to resolve phylogenetic relationships with closely related taxa and develop a TRLO specific molecular diagnostic assay (PCR).

The project began by completing a pilot assessment of in-house Oxford Nanopore Technology (ONT) sequencing methods using three so-called TRLO-EC isolates that were isolated in pure culture from samples were delivered to the AHL in February 2024, from Atlantic salmon grown at a lease in southern Tasmania. They were submitted under suspicion that fish were affected by Tasmanian Salmonid Rickettsiosis (TSR), the disease associated with Tasmanian RLOs. Molecular testing showed that 4/4 samples were RLO/*P. salmonis* qPCR (Corbeil et al., 2003) positive. Bacteria were isolated in pure culture from three liver samples and their identity confirmed as 'TRLO-EC' by RLO/*P. salmonis* qPCR (Corbeil et al., 2003) and dot blot serotyping.

From this WGS analysis, the *P. salmonis* organism has been determined retrospectively in 2024 to have been in Tasmanian east coast waters since at least 2021 indicating that the pathogen may have been circulating for five or more years. It is possible that it was in east coast waters from 2019.

Piscirickettsia salmonis | Information sheet

Pathology

A range of gross signs of disease may be present in salmonids infected with *P. salmonis* in common with many systemic, chronic inflammatory diseases of salmonids. Liver pathology (abscesses) may be the only definitive sign seen macroscopically. Confirmation requires testing in a fish health laboratory such as the AHL, Mount Pleasant.

It is worth noting that isolation of *P. salmonis* in culture has occurred within the AHL, a physical containment level 2 (PC2) facility. According to AS/NZS 2243.32, culture of risk group 3 pathogens, including *P. salmonis*, is restricted to PC3 laboratories. However, at the time of isolation, cultures were obtained on the understanding that they were a variant TRLO (i.e. risk group 2) and not an exotic risk group 3 pathogen. It is anticipated that there will be reclassification of the AS/NZS 2243.3 risk group to which *P. salmonis* is assigned.

Antibiotics

A bacterial outbreak is managed by industry veterinarians through the approved use of antibiotics (primarily Oxytetracycline to date), but only rarely and when necessary – no different to any other animal illness. Veterinarians are required to report the use of antibiotics in the marine environment in Tasmania to the Tasmanian Chief Veterinary Officer and the Director of the Environment Protection Authority. If fish were successfully treated with antibiotics they would have to be held for a certain calculated period (approximately two months) before they can be harvested for human consumption. This period allows the depletion of antibiotic residues to levels below Australian food safety standards levels, and they would be perfectly healthy to eat.

Vaccine

A vaccine has been developed by the Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines, Mount Pleasant, and is used as a key strategy to protect salmon from this bacterium. The vaccine protects Atlantic salmon against eight bacteria, including *P. salmonis* (TRLO-EC) and is expected to assist the Tasmanian salmon industry in mitigating against the immediate threat posed by *P. salmonis*. However, no vaccine can be regarded as being completely protective and there are a number of factors that may degrade vaccine immunity. Scientific studies continue into the characteristics of the bacterial isolates and their relevance for fish vaccines. Fish can only be vaccinated by injection when they are still quite small in the freshwater hatchery.

Kevin de Witte

Chief Veterinary Officer Tasmania

17 March 2025

Salmon Mortality Event: D'Entrecasteaux Channel

Questions and Answers

This information sheet provides Questions and Answers relating to the salmon mortality event that has occurred in Tasmania's D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

It is for members of the community seeking information about the nature and management of the event.

Question: What is the material washing up on some Southern Tasmanian beaches and shorelines?

The material is fatty fish material.

Question: Is the fatty fish material harmful?

No, it is not harmful to humans. The presence of fatty fish material on beaches, while unpleasant and smelly, will not harm health. A naturally occurring bacterium that does not cause human disease is the main reason for the fish dying.

The Department of Health advises that people should not handle or consume the fish material and avoid activities that will bring you into contact with it. This same advice applies to any other dead animal parts in the natural environment. Leaving such material alone eliminates any risk.

If you do make contact with the material, wash it off with soap and water.

Question: Will my dog get sick if they eat any of the fatty fish material that has washed up on a beach?

No. The fatty fish material poses no risk to humans or domestic animals.

Question: Why have the salmon in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel died?

Salmon like cold water. Every summer as the marine water warms up it is not unusual for salmon producers to experience some mortalities. This year the warmer waters and a bacteria called P. salmonis that affects salmon health has resulted in an unprecedented mortality event.

Question: What is P. salmonis?

P. salmonis is the shortened name for Piscirickettsia salmonis.

P. salmonis is a bacterium that causes piscirickettsiosis disease in salmon. The Chief Veterinary Officer has published an Information Sheet on P. salmonis to assist the community to understand the disease.

Salmon Mortality Event: D'Entrecasteaux Channel | Questions and Answers

More Information can be found in the [P. salmonis fact sheet](#).

Question: How is the P. salmonis bacteria managed?

The P. salmonis bacteria is managed by salmon producers through vaccination and medication as required.

The Tasmanian salmonid industry, with support from Government and the Fisheries Research Development Corporation, has invested heavily in research to develop a vaccine against this disease.

The Tasmanian government has developed a vaccine for the P. salmonis bacteria at its Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines Mt Pleasant laboratories. The vaccine was first used in 2023, but only in the east coast marine farming zone.

The vaccine protects Atlantic salmon against a number of bacteria, including P. salmonis and is expected to assist the Tasmanian salmon producers in mitigating against the immediate threat posed by P. salmonis.

Medications such as antibiotics to treat fish health are not used often. In the rare event that fish in marine farms require treatment, companies must advise the Environment Protection Authority Director and the Chief Veterinary Officer before the treatment is applied.

The dose rates and treatment times for administering medications to the salmon are carefully managed to avoid residues. Following the administration of the medication fish cannot be harvested for a specific period of time.

This is a legal requirement. More information on the use of medication such as antibiotics in marine farms can be found here: [Management of Therapeutants](#).

The biosecurity standards for the Tasmanian Salmonid Industry ensures marine farms also carefully control the movement of their equipment and fish between marine farming zones to assist in the management of the bacteria.

Question: Is P. salmonis bacteria harmful to humans?

No. It is a naturally occurring bacteria that only affects salmon. The bacterium is of no risk to humans and other warm-blooded animals.

The bacteria is not a reportable disease under the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and it is not on the Tasmanian exotic and emergency list.

Question: Is the salmon safe to consume?

Salmon harvested for human consumption must meet all the usual food safety requirements. Fish that have died from the disease are not harvested for human consumption.

Question: Is the bacteria in other marine farming areas in Tasmania?

Yes. The bacteria P. salmonis is present in other marine farming in areas. The bacteria has been confirmed to present in 2024 in the east coast salmonid marine biosecurity zone since 2021 and in the south east salmonid marine biosecurity zone since 2023.

Salmon Mortality Event: D'Entrecasteaux Channel | Questions and Answers

Question: Can *P. salmonis* bacteria affect other fish or marine animals affected?

No. *P. salmonis* is a bacteria that affects saltwater salmonoids.

The bacteria does not survive in the water above 25 Degrees Celsius and it poses no known risk to native freshwater fish.

The bacteria is also not known to pose a threat to other marine (saltwater) species.

Question: Is the *P. salmonis* the same as the strain of *P. salmonis* found in Chile.

No. It is not the same strain as present in Chile.

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What we know about Florfenicol

Fact sheet

What is Florfenicol?

Florfenicol is an antibiotic, that is used in the aquaculture industry globally to treat fish. It is known to be beneficial in the treatment of p.salmonis in salmon.

Has Florfenicol been used in Australia as a treatment option in animals and fish?

Yes, it is widely used in farmed animals and it has been used in Tasmania previously, but not “at scale” for the treatment of large numbers of farmed salmon. It has not been used in Tasmania for some time.

What approvals are required to use Florfenicol in Salmon in Tasmania?

Approvals are required from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to allow its use on Salmon in Tasmania. A temporary exemption is presently being sought by the manufacturer as full approval will take up to a year to obtain.

What are the known benefits of using Florfenicol over Oxytetracycline which is the current antibiotic being used?

- Effective doses are significantly lower for florfenicol, meaning lower quantities of antibiotic can be administered.
- Florfenicol is highly bioavailable, meaning the vast majority of consumed antibiotic is absorbed by the fish
- Florfenicol is metabolised quickly by the fish, meaning there are low levels of metabolites excreted into the waterways.
- Florfenicol does not adsorb as strongly to sediments, nor does it persist for as long in sediments
- Florfenicol displays low toxicity to aquatic organisms
- Despite widespread Florfenicol use in Chile, antibiotic resistance has not developed in P. salmonis as a result of this use.

Does Florfenicol have any impacts on human health?

Our understanding to date is the antibiotic presents a low risk to humans. This is being assessed by the Department of Health.

Is it safe to eat fish caught in the area during a treatment period?

Current advice is that maximum residue limits must be observed before fish are consumed. This is being assessed by the Department of Health to determine how wild caught fish may be affected and for how long.

What risks will there be to our waterways from the use of Florfenicol?

The advice and research received from the use of this antibiotic in the aquaculture industry globally is that there are benefits and that the risks are low, however the context of use is important to better understand how it will respond across different fish species, water temperatures and farming systems. The EPA and the DoH intend to closely monitor any impacts.

Will the dosage and impacts of this new antibiotic be disclosed?

This is being provided to EPA and NRE Tas as commercial in confidence, however we can advise that dosage must be consistent with the published dose rates of this antibiotic use in the aquaculture industry globally. Similarly, withholding timeframes must be in accordance with the Maximum Residue Level set for the product.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Web: www.nre.tas.gov.au
