



News Release

Aug 22, 2007

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia cases confirmed in Ontario

Ottawa, August 22, 2007— The Government of Canada today announced that the Great Lakes strain of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia has been detected in fish from Hamilton Harbour and the Thames River in Ontario. These two findings mark the first detections of the disease in 2007 in Canada.

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia is an infectious viral disease that can cause illness and death in fish, but does not affect human health. Fish were initially tested by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the University of Guelph before Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia was confirmed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

These findings fall within the Ontario ministry's identified management zone for the disease. Therefore, no changes are planned to existing Ontario live fish movement controls implemented in early 2007. Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia has been detected in the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes basin since 2005.

The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, is currently conducting a surveillance program to better understand the geographic distribution of the virus and affected species. To date, fish from six sites in Ontario and Quebec have been tested, and no additional cases of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia have been detected. The results of this program, once analyzed, will help guide actions that federal and provincial governments may take to further manage the disease.

A similar, complementary surveillance program is also underway in the United States to provide a complete picture of the presence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia in the Great Lakes basin.

A full report of 2007 Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia findings from the joint federal-provincial surveillance program will be released in the fall. This program is expected to continue for the next two years. The two provinces will continue to collect fish in the fall of 2007 with the collaboration of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to collect additional samples with provincial funding from the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.

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