



Lawsuit takes aim at College of Veterinarians' refusal to investigate complaint

For Immediate Release

Vancouver, BC, January 6th, 2015 — On behalf of their client, biologist Alexandra Morton, lawyers with Ecojustice Canada are suing the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia for refusing to investigate a complaint she made against a government aquaculture veterinarian. The lawsuit seeks to force the College to investigate the complaint.

In 2007, a government veterinarian gave misleading advice to the B.C. government regarding threats posed by a dangerous salmon virus called Infectious Salmon Anemia virus ("ISAV"). ISAV is an internationally reportable virus and a member of the influenza family that has killed millions of salmon and caused massive losses to aquaculture industries in Chile, eastern Canada, and Norway.

The veterinarian advised the Minister of Agriculture and Lands that the import of live Atlantic salmon eggs is a high risk activity that contributed to the development of ISAV infection. Problematically, the veterinarian also told the Minister that live Atlantic salmon eggs are not imported to B.C., and are not allowed to be imported to be B.C.; these two facts are false. At the time the advice was provided, over 28 million live Atlantic salmon eggs had been imported to B.C. Salmon raised from those eggs were placed in open net pens on wild Pacific salmon migration routes where their viruses can come into contact with wild fish.

In 2013, biologist Alexandra Morton asked the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia to investigate whether the veterinarian's erroneous advice amounted to professional misconduct.

"ISA virus is the most lethal salmon virus known. It threatens our marine ecosystems and coastal communities and an outbreak could be catastrophic" explains Morton. "In situations like this, veterinarians must be held to the highest ethical and scientific standards.

"The College's reasons for failing to investigate our client's complaint appear inadequate" says Ecojustice lawyer Morgan Blakley. "The College must take its duty to investigate complaints seriously; especially where complaints deal with veterinary advice on issues with such far-reaching implications."

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