

UK APPLICATION FOR AN APPROVED PROGRAMME TO REGAIN APPROVED ZONE STATUS FOR VHS, FOR THE RIVER OUSE FROM ITS SOURCES TO THE NORMAL TIDAL LIMIT AT NABURN LOCK AND WEIR.

Background to the application

Following confirmation of an outbreak of Viral Haemorrhagic Septicaemia (VHS) on Nidderdale Trout farm in Yorkshire on the 26th May 2006, the Great Britain approved zone status for VHS was immediately suspended. After application of appropriate control measures and epizootic investigations, the outbreak was confirmed to be isolated to an area of the River Ouse from its sources to the normal tidal limit at Naburn Lock and Weir. This area was withdrawn from the GB approved zone for VHS (Commission Decision 2006/674/EC) on 7th October 2006. A buffer zone, situated in the estuary directly below the affected zone, has also been removed from the approved zone and controls remain on these two zones. There are no fish farms situated in this buffer zone.

Fish Health Inspectors tested for a virus disease on 22nd May 2006 following a visit to the farm at the farmer's request to investigate unexplained disease mortalities. Movement controls (in accordance with the additional guarantees in Decision 2004/453/EC) were already in place at the farm due to an outbreak of Bacterial Kidney Disease in June 2005. On confirmation of VHS, all fish at Nidderdale Trout Farm were slaughtered and disposed of in accordance with Regulation 1774/2002 over the following 48-hours. The farm site was drained and disinfected under supervision of the official service and then underwent a 5 month fallow period. Movement controls were also placed on 33 fish farms (23 of which hold susceptible species), situated both within the zone of the affected farm and in contiguous zones (see map at Annex 1).

A programme of testing fish from each of the farms was immediately carried out. After 2 rounds of testing at each of the farms none showed evidence of infection and movement controls were removed on all farms outside the zone in which Nidderdale Trout farm is situated.

Extensive testing has been carried out, in wild fish stocks, above and below Nidderdale Trout Farm. The virus was isolated from a single pooled sample of grayling captured immediately below the outlet of the affected farm a few days after VHS was confirmed. In the second round of testing, only a single grayling, taken less than 1 mile downriver of the farm outlet, proved VHSV positive (by the PCR test). All fish sampled upriver of the farm and further tests on fish up to 35 miles downstream were negative for the virus.

An epizootic investigation into the outbreak has been undertaken and submitted to the Commission.

The company operating Nidderdale Trout farm has applied to recommence operations. They are fully aware of the requirements for operating outside of the GB approved zone. To facilitate this and to increase certainty that the virus is no longer present on or around the farm, a sentinel population of 10,000 juvenile fish were

introduced on 14th November 2006. This population has been closely monitored and subject to 3 separate 150 fish samples, 7 days apart. Since the results of testing on this population and in the wild have proved to be negative, a limited commercial stocking (to one third of farm capacity) of the farm was permitted on the 19th December 2006. The farm will produce only for the food chain and will slaughter and eviscerate fish on site.

Objectives of the programme

The aim of this programme is, in accordance with Article 49 of Directive 2006/88/EC, and following 2 years of inspection and testing, to obtain an approved zone for VHS for:

1. The River Ouse from its sources to the normal tidal limit at Naburn Lock and Weir
2. The associated buffer zone.

The overall objective of the programme is, through this approval, to re-establish the approved zone status for the entire Great Britain area.

PROGRAMME TO ACHIEVE APPROVED ZONE STATUS FOR FREEDOM FROM VIRAL HAEMORRHAGIC SEPTICAEMIA (VHS)

1. GEOGRAPHICAL ZONE AND FARMS CONCERNED

The programme covers the territory of the River Ouse from its sources to the normal tidal limit at Naburn Lock and Weir and the associated buffer zone (see the map at Annex 1). There are 8 farms located within this territory, 3 holding susceptible species. The rivers Ouse, Nidd and Ure which constitute the unapproved Ouse zone contain brown trout, grayling, pike and sea trout as well as a range of other VHS non-susceptible species including roach, eels, stone loach, bullheads and lamprey

2. TIMING

The programme commenced on 17th October 2006 and will be completed after a period of two years testing in autumn 2008.

3. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE OFFICIAL SERVICES TO ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAMME IS PROPERLY CARRIED OUT

The authority responsible for ensuring that the measures to be adopted in the programme zone comply with the provisions of Directive 2006/88/EC is:-

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
LONDON
SW1P 3JR

The responsible authorities are assisted by:-

Fish Health Inspectorate
CEFAS
The Nothe
WEYMOUTH
Dorset
DT4 8UB

On behalf of the authority, staff at the CEFAS laboratory are responsible for the inspection and surveillance of all fish farms in England and Wales, the collection of samples, diagnostic testing and for the supervision of measures required to eradicate disease. In addition to the surveillance programme for fish farms the laboratory will continue to take samples from wild fisheries in GB waters. They are also responsible for the completion of health certification for fish movements.

The following measures have been adopted:-

1. Inspection of fish farms

Pursuant to Article 49 and Annex V of Directive 2006/88/EC, inspection visits are being made to all fish farms in the programme zone twice a year. These health inspections will include at least:

- An inspection of fish showing abnormalities;
- The taking of 150 fish samples from each site on each visit, which will be sent directly to the approved laboratory.

2. Control of the movements of live and dead fish

Although the approved zone status for VHS has been withdrawn in the programme area, it remains an approved zone in respect of Infectious Haematopoietic Necrosis (IHN). The following restrictions on trade in fish have therefore applied:

Movements into the area

Because of its IHN approved status, live fish of susceptible species from the EU may only enter the area from IHN approved Member state, zone or compartment. Live fish, eggs and gametes must be accompanied by the relevant health documentation certifying the consignment fulfils the requirements mentioned above.

Import of live fish, eggs and gametes from third countries must meet equivalent conditions.

Movements out of area

Because of the removal of approval in respect of VHS, any susceptible species moved from the area must be dead and eviscerated unless being introduced to a Member State, zone or compartment of similar health status.

Movements of live non-susceptible species from sites not in contact with susceptible species out of the unapproved zone will be permitted where inspection allows provision of appropriate health assurances and movement documents can be issued.

3. Register of farms rearing or keeping fish susceptible to exotic and non-exotic diseases

All fish farms must be registered by the official service and this register must be kept constantly up to date.

A record must be kept of:

- a. Live fish, eggs and gametes entering the farm, containing all information relating to their delivery, their number or weight, their size, their source and their suppliers;
- b. Live fish, eggs and gametes leaving the farm, containing all information relating to their dispatch, their number or weight, their size and destination;

c. Recorded mortality.

This record, which is open to scrutiny by the official service whenever the latter so requests, must be regularly updated and kept for 4 years.

4. Notification of diseases

Fish farmers must notify Fisheries Departments immediately they suspect the presence of a listed disease. On receipt of notification, the official service will visit the site and take a sample of fish for laboratory analysis and may impose temporary movement controls as a precaution.

5. Wild Fish

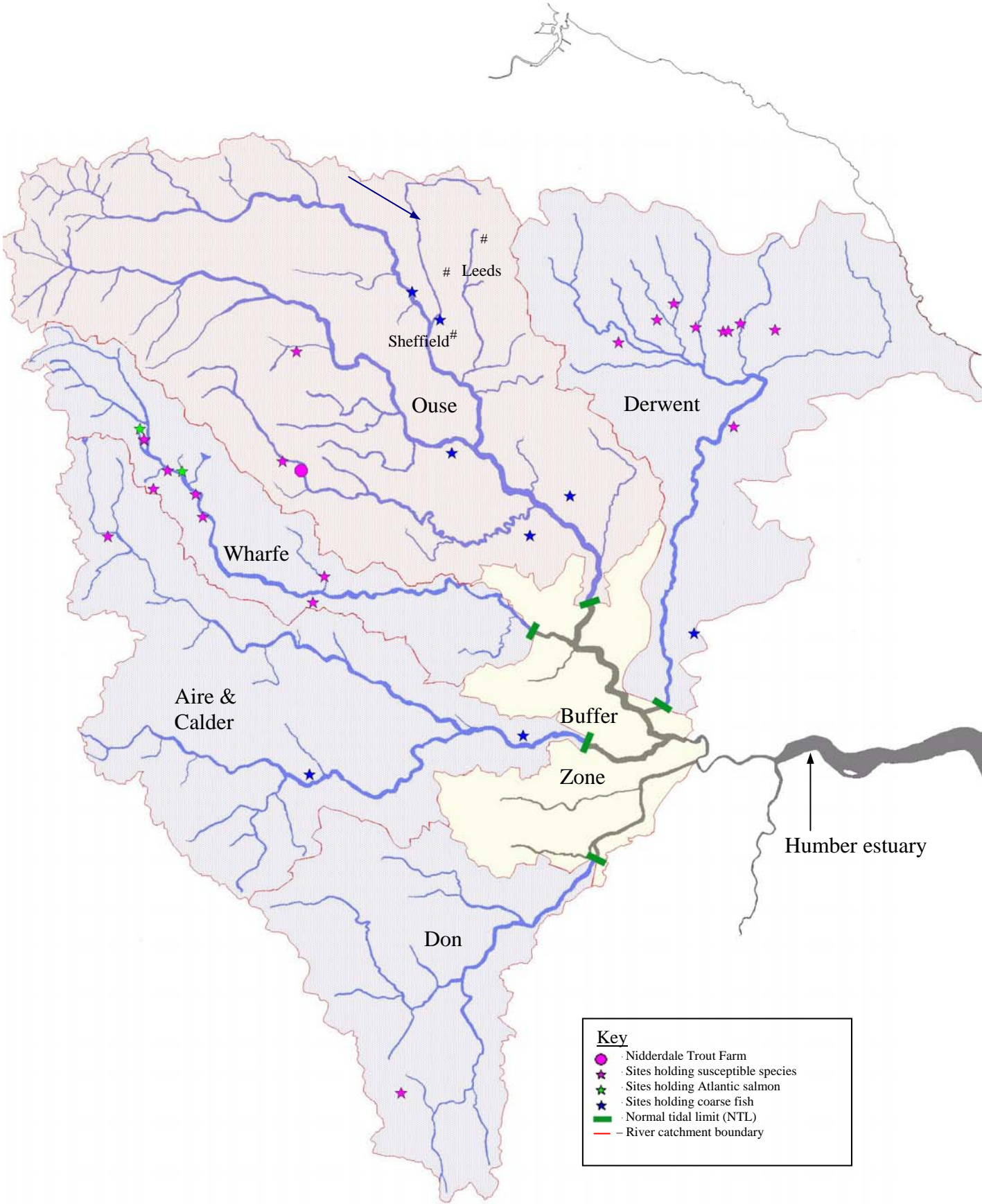
Over and above the testing of farmed fish, a programme of wild fish testing will be conducted in the buffer zone where there are no fish farms. This will include twice yearly sampling of wild VHS susceptible fish species at the interface of the Ouse estuary buffer zone with the Ouse zone seeking re-approval and the other contiguous zones shown in Annex 1.

4. **LABORATORY**

As part of the inspection and surveillance of all fish farms in Great Britain, samples taken from fish farms in England and Wales are sent to the National Reference Laboratory, at CEFAS Weymouth.

Annex 1

Detail of the five river catchments within the Designated Area



Area excluded from re-established approved zone for VHS (Commission Decision 2006/674/EC)

