

# Updates to Great Britain's Susceptible and Vector Species Lists

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# Executive Summary

Great Britain's (GB) susceptible and vector species (SVS) lists were removed from legislation in August 2022. The lists are out of date and do not reflect current scientific knowledge. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Scottish Government and Welsh Government have updated the lists in line with current scientific evidence. The revised lists can be found in **Annex I**.

The following approach has been taken to update GB's SVS lists:

## Susceptible species lists

Any aquatic species listed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) as susceptible to a disease listed in GB legislation will be added to GB's susceptible species lists.

## Vector species lists

Any aquatic species listed by WOAH as vectors to a disease listed in Annex 1A of retained EU Commission Regulation (EC) 1251/2008, or as being species with incomplete evidence of susceptibility to a disease listed in Annex 1A, will be added to GB's vector species lists.

## Hybrid Species

The following condition will be added to the lists of susceptible species for the fish diseases, '*Hybrids of any susceptible species listed above will also be considered as susceptible*'. Similarly, for the vector species lists, '*Hybrids of any vector species listed above will also be considered as vectors*'.

**The expectation is that all the changes will come into effect on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The updated lists will be published on GOV.UK.**

If a species is added to GB's SVS lists, trade in that species may be subject to additional animal health restrictions and there will be implications in the event of a disease outbreak.

Most changes to GB's SVS lists are expected to have minimal impact on GB industry. Exceptions to this are changes to the listing of the following species: Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), zebrafish (*Danio rerio*) and Pacific cupped oysters (*Magallana [Syn. Crassostrea] gigas*).

We are seeking your views on what potential business impacts you identify as a result of the updates to GB's SVS lists set out in Annex 1, including those highlighted under the section titled 'Species of Note'.

# Background

Countries exporting live aquatic animals to GB must certify that species susceptible to listed disease, or those that meet the criteria to act as a vector to listed disease, originate from disease-free areas.

GB's SVS lists are based on retained EU legislation and GB legislation. The lists were last updated in 2012. In August 2022, the lists were moved out of legislation and are now managed administratively on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The lists are out of date and do not reflect current scientific knowledge. Therefore, Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government have updated the lists in line with current scientific evidence. The revised lists can be found in Annex I.

Updating the lists:

- ensures that GB is protected from the introduction of a listed disease via the imports of live aquatic animals; and
- ensures that appropriate control measures can be implemented on relevant species if there is an outbreak of a listed disease in GB.

After publication, the SVS lists will be periodically updated, as required.

## Approach to updating the SVS list

An approach has been adopted to updating GB's SVS lists by retaining species included on the current lists and adding further species based on internationally recognised criteria and supported by scientific evidence.

### Susceptible species lists

**Any aquatic species listed by WOAHP as susceptible to a disease listed in GB legislation will be added to GB's susceptible species lists.**

WOAH maintains susceptible species lists for aquatic animal diseases, including those diseases listed in GB legislation. Ad-hoc expert working groups review published scientific evidence to assess whether a species should be added to or removed from the WOAHP susceptible species lists, using the following criteria:

- whether the route of transmission is consistent with natural pathways for the infection
- whether the pathogenic agent has been adequately identified
- whether the evidence indicates that presence of the pathogenic agent constitutes an infection

We consider this to be the most robust, balanced approach to listing susceptible species and it is an internationally supported process. In future the same criteria will be adopted to assess whether a species is susceptible to a disease.

## Vector species lists

**Any aquatic species listed by WOAHA as vectors to a disease listed in Annex 1A of retained EU Commission Regulation (EC) 1251/2008, or as being species with incomplete evidence of susceptibility to a disease listed in Annex 1A, will be added to GB's vector species lists.**

WOAHA also maintains vector species lists for aquatic animal diseases. A species is added to these lists where there is demonstration of pathogen transmission to a susceptible species.

In addition, WOAHA categorises some species as “species with incomplete evidence of susceptibility” either because they have:

- incomplete evidence to fulfil the susceptible species criteria but partial information is available; or,
- pathogen-specific positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) results have been reported with no further evidence demonstrating active infection.

Inclusion in either of these categories means there is evidence of the pathogen being present in or on the species, and there is therefore a potential risk of pathogen transfer to susceptible species (though such a transfer has not necessarily been conclusively demonstrated). In the interest of applying an evidence-based approach to GB's biosecurity, these species will also be added to GB's vector species lists until a robust review of scientific evidence on a risk-based prioritisation is conducted by GB experts. Such an approach is supported by WOAHA recommendations.

Note - some species on the current GB vector species lists are categorised as susceptible species by WOAHA. They will therefore be removed from the GB vector species list and added to GB's susceptible species list.

## Hybrid species

Scientific evidence suggests that hybrids of susceptible species may remain susceptible to listed diseases. Therefore, the following condition will be added to the lists of susceptible species for the fish diseases, '*Hybrids of any susceptible species listed above will also be considered as susceptible*'. Similarly, for the vector species lists, '*Hybrids of any vector species listed above will also be considered as vectors*'.

## Changes to conditions under which species are considered a vector

**For epizootic haematopoietic necrosis (EHN) possible vector species shall be regarded as a vector of EHN under all conditions.**

**For all other listed diseases, possible vector species shall be regarded as a vector when they are in contact with species listed as susceptible through co-habitation or through water supply.**

A species is only considered a vector when certain conditions are fulfilled. These conditions vary depending on the listed disease and are detailed in a [table published on GOV.UK](#).

We will amend the vector species conditions so that any species on the GB lists of vector species, except for those listed for EHN, are regarded as a vector to a specific disease when in contact with species listed as susceptible through co-habitation or through water supply.

**The expectation is that all the changes outlined above will come into effect on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The updated lists will be published on GOV.UK.**

## Impact

If a species is added to GB's SVS lists:

- Trade in that species may be subject to additional animal health restrictions
  - for example, an official inspector in the exporting country may need to certify that the animal originates from an area that is free from the disease(s) they are listed for, or, in the case of wild aquatic animals, has been subject to quarantine.
- There will be implications in the event of a disease outbreak
  - for example, movement controls and trade restrictions are likely to be applied to susceptible and vector species.

Under the [Border Target Operating Model](#), EU to EU transits across the GB landbridge will need to adhere to the same animal health requirements as imports from 31 January 2024. Changes to GB's SVS lists will impact these movements.

## Species of Note

We are of the view that the majority of changes to GB's SVS lists will have minimal impact on GB industry, with the following exceptions:

### Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)

Atlantic salmon will be added to GB's susceptible species list for viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS). Generally, sources of Atlantic salmon already certify that they are free of VHS, so trade impacts are expected to be minimal.

Currently Scottish Government's policy is to prohibit the use of cleaner fish (wrasse species and lumpfish) with VHS susceptible species such as rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). However, it has been concluded, based on a scientific review, that the use of cleaner fish with Atlantic salmon will continue to be allowed.

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Scottish Government experts jointly agree that the scientific literature and historical testing which underpins current policy still supports a low susceptibility of Atlantic salmon to VHS, and evidence of greater susceptibility for rainbow trout, particularly with respect to genotype III.

If the presence of VHS is confirmed (as with any listed disease) the farm will be subject to statutory control measures in accordance with the Aquatic Animal Health (Scotland) Regulations 2009. In situations where only suspicion of VHS exists then it may be permissible to continue farming operations and allow a period of on growing before harvest. This will be subject to statutory disease controls and on a case-by-case basis.

### **Zebrafish (*Danio rerio*)**

Zebrafish will be added to GB's susceptible species lists for VHS and spring viraemia of carp (SVC).

Zebrafish are imported into GB for scientific research and as ornamental animals. Some sources of these imports are not declared free of VHS and SVC. The addition of zebrafish to GB's susceptible species list for VHS and SVC may disrupt trade in these animals.

However, trade from sources that are not declared free from VHS and SVC can take place where legal exemptions from the requirement for health certification exist. These exemptions will normally only apply where the fish are destined for research facilities with suitable biosecurity. Fish Health Inspectors will be able to advise on appropriate biosecurity measures in relation to trade enquiries.

### **Pacific cupped oysters (*Magallana* [Syn. *Crassostrea*] *gigas*)**

Pacific cupped oysters will not be listed as a vector species for *Bonamia exitiosa*, *Bonamia ostreae* and *Marteilia refringens*.

Pacific cupped oysters are currently on the GB vector species list for *B. exitiosa* and positive PCR results have been reported for *B. ostreae* and *M. refringens* by WOA, with no further evidence demonstrating active infection.

Cefas and Scottish Government experts have recently conducted a detailed review of available scientific evidence. This has enabled the process of reviewing the vector species list in the long-term to be expedited in this case. Following a risk assessment, it was concluded that experimental studies indicate that it is unlikely that Pacific cupped oysters can act as a vector for *B. exitiosa*, *B. ostreae* and *M. refringens*.

Therefore, Pacific cupped oysters will not be listed as a vector species for *B. exitiosa*, *B. ostreae* and *M. refringens*.

## **Stakeholder Engagement Question**

What potential business impacts have you identified as a result of the updates to GB's SVS lists set out in Annex 1, including those highlighted under the section titled 'Species of Note' above.