The Use of Sentinel Cages to Investigate Infection Pressure from Sea Lice in Scotland, Norway, Canada and Ireland.

*C.C. Pert¹, L. Asplin², S.R.M. Jones³, P. O'Donohoe⁴, S.M. Saksida⁵ and K. Kroon Boxaspen²

1 Marine Scotland (Science), 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen AB11 9DB, Scotland, UK. 2 Institute of Marine Research, P.O. Box 1870, 5817 Bergen, Norway. 3 Pacific Biological Station. Fisheries & Oceans Canada. 3190 Hammond Bay Rd. Nanaimo, British Columbia V9R 6N7, Canada 4 Marine Institute, Rinville, Oranmore, Co. Galway, Ireland. 5 BC Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences, Campbell River, British

Columbia, V9W 5B1, Canada

Introduction

Understanding the distribution and dispersal of sea lice has become important with the advent of increased numbers of farmed salmon. One of the major challenges faced by researchers when conducting similar studies in different regions/countries is the need for common methodologies and technology. An example of this need is the use of sentinel salmon smolts held in cages to determine the infection pressure from viable sea lice at specific locations. A team of researchers (Co-ordinated Action Lice International – CALI) from Norway, Scotland, Canada and Ireland conducted a series of trials in which sentinel cages constructed to the Scottish, Norwegian and Irish specifications were used in Norway, Scotland, Canada and Ireland.



Results

Trials carried out in Scotland & Ireland (Figures 8 & 9) comparing Scottish, Norwegian and Irish cages directly demonstrated very similar infection levels. Due to logistical reasons we were unable to transport the Canadian cages to either trial but as they are designed to the same specification as the Scottish cages it can be expected that they would perform similarly. Infections with *Lepeophtheirus* salmonis and Caligus spp. were observed and settlement of copepodids was observed in all trials. Occasionally infections were initiated with pre-adult L. salmonis and some adult Caligus spp. were observed.





Methods

During August and September 2007 the sentinel cages designed in Scotland (Figure 1) and those designed in Norway (Figure 2) were deployed in Loch Shieldaig, Scotland, for one week with a reciprocal trial in Hardanger fjord, in April 2009. Between November 2008 and March 2009 cages (Figure 3) constructed to Scottish specifications were deployed in the Broughton Archipelago, British Columbia. In December 2009 cages constructed to Irish (Figure 4), Scottish and Norwegian specifications were deployed at two sites in Kilkieran Bay, Connemara, Co. Galway. In all studies, cages contained between 30 and 70 smolts and deployments ranged from 7 to 21 days. Following deployments the fish were removed, euthanized and the number of lice at each developmental stage recorded (Figures 5). The abundance of lice on sentinel fish from each cage was calculated to try and remove any effects of cage size from the





Figure 1: Scottish sentinel cages.

Figure 2: Norwegian sentinel cages.



Figures 5, 6 & 7: Examining a salmon smolt (Above) for sea lice in Hardanger fjord Norway.



Figure 8&9: Comparison between the abundance of settled sea lice on Atlantic salmon held in sentinel cages from Scotland, Norway and Ireland - please note in Figure 8 fish in Norwegian cages suffered 100% mortality.

Conclusion

From the trials carried out in Scotland, Norway, Ireland and Canada the initial findings suggest that while the design and size of the various national cages differ slightly, observed louse settlement on fish is sufficiently similar to allow data comparisons among participating countries to be carried out. While further data collection and statistical analysis should be carried out, the CALI program has demonstrated that standardising methodology across nations allows datasets to be combined and examined resulting in more robust conclusions to be drawn and effect advice on future integrated sea lice management strategies.



Figure 3: Canadian sentinel cages.



Cage Facts

Scotland – Plastic circular cages 1.5m diameter x 2m deep with 13mm knotless mesh. **Norway** – Fibreglass circular cages 1m diameter x 1m deep with 12mm knotless mesh. **Canada** – Steel circular cages 1m diameter x 1.5m deep with 13mm knotless mesh. **Ireland** – Plastic square cages 2m x 2m x 2.2m with 16mm knotless mesh.



	AIA	

Figure 4: Irish sentinel cages.

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	Canada	Canada





MODELLING DISPERSAL OF SEA LICE IN CONTRASTING ENVIRONMENTS IN SCOTLAND, NORWAY AND CANADA

marine scotland Science ³Dep

Alexander Murray¹, Lars Asplin², Mike Foreman³ and Dario Stucchi³ ¹Marine Scotland Science, Aberdeen, Scotland, United Kingdom, murrays@marlab.ac.uk ²Institute of Marine Science, Bergen, Norway, Iars.asplin@imr.no ³Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Sidney, British Columbia, Canada, Dario.Stucchi@dfo-mpo.gc.ca



Introduction

CALI (Coordinated Action Lice International) is an international project, funded by the Norwegian Research Council to bring together researchers working on dispersal of sea lice (*Lepeophtheirus salmonis*). Coupled hydrodynamic – particle tracking models to simulate larval lice dispersal in coastal systems, and supported by extensive observational data sets, have been developed by the national

Basic Methodology: Coupled modelling



Hydrodynamic model

Takes environmental forcing wind, boundary tides, freshwater inputs Uses fluid dynamics equations Calculates current velocities

Broughton Archipelago, Canada

- Complex system of fjords and islands in British Columbia
- Large area with relatively low density of farms
- Observation: plankton sampling and wild fish loads
- Hydrodynamic model: FVCOM
 Unstructured grid model
- Forced with local winds, observed run off & tides
- Lice biology dependent on environment in model

research organisations of Scotland, Norway and Canada.



Simulated Lice Distribution: Loch Torridon Relative concentration of particles summed over 7 days



Particle model

Calculates particle stage nauplii (non infectious) copepodid (infectious) dead

Temperature and maturation [°] Salinity and mortality rate Takes currents from hydrodynamic model Calculates position of particle

Sums many particles over time

Output: concentration field = infection risk field

Hardangerfjord, Norway

- Large (180 km) fjordic system in western Norway
 One of the worlds densest salmon farming areas.
 Observation: sentinel cage settlement, wild sea trout lice loads and post smolt trawling.
 Hydrodynamic model: ROMS 200 m grid resolution. Realistic forcing.
 Atmospheric model: WRF.
- Model lice: Grow for150 degree days; Three

- Spatial agreement of model output and observed lice, although modelled concentrations lower than observed
- See: Foreman et al. (2009) Ocean Modelling 30, 29-47

 Log_{10} (cop. m⁻³)



Simulated distribution for Broughton Archipelago Daily average for 25th March 2008

Loch Torridon, Scotland

- Small (25 km) fjordic system NW Scotland
- Observation: shoreline and offshore larvae, sentinel cage settlement and wild sea trout lice loads
- Hydrodynamic model GF8

10 minute 100 m resolution grid forced with wind, tides and runoff

- Lice buoyant, with temperature dependent maturation
- Concentrations of lice can form distant from source
- Wind dependent
- See: Amundrud and Murray (2009) J. Fish Diseases 32, 27-44



planktonic stages; Diurnal migration in upper 10 m; Avoid brackish water

 Lice transported over long distances, location varies dependent on environmental forcing



Simulated distribution of salmon lice particles after 10 days of continuous release

Conclusions

The systems modelled vary in scale, complexity, climate and ecology. The modelling and parameterisations have benefited from the extensive international collaboration between these countries including novel hydrodynamic modelling to cope with the complex geography of fjordic systems, modelling of wind forcing and models of lice biology. A general finding across these differing systems is the weather and/or flow-dependent formation of concentrations of larval lice at locations that are distant from their source.







