# Shock footage reveals salmon farm worker urinating in fish pens amid wider welfare concerns



Shock footage released by campaign group Animal Equality has triggered significant outrage against the practices within the salmon farming industry, specifically regarding a recent incident at a facility run by Wester Ross Fisheries near Ardmair, Ullapool. The video, captured from a drone, depicts a worker urinating into fish pens, provoking concerns among animal welfare advocates about the health and treatment of farmed fish.

In the footage, two workers are seen on a steel walkway between several salmon cages; one proceeds to relieve himself beside the fish. In response to the clip, Abigail Penny, Executive Director of Animal Equality UK, stated, “It’s revolting. This is a world away from the pristine, ocean-fresh image the industry sells to consumers.” Such images starkly contrast the marketing narratives that highlight the artisanal and environmentally conscious practices claimed by luxury salmon brands.

While experts noted that the urine would likely dilute in seawater and not pose an immediate health risk to the fish, the incident underscores broader, deeply embedded issues within the salmon farming industry. Mark Borthwick, an aquatic animal specialist, explained that farmed salmon face significant challenges due to environmental pollution already present in their habitats. He elaborated that each ton of salmon produced generates effluent equivalent to that of 80 humans, which dramatically alters the conditions in which these fish live. “These animals are literally suffocating in their own waste,” noted Borthwick.

The welfare of farmed salmon has come under increasing scrutiny for a variety of reasons. Conditions often include overcrowding, which leads to heightened stress and susceptibility to disease, as well as inadequate access to natural behaviours. This is exacerbated by the use of chemicals to combat parasites like sea lice, which can further harm both the fish and the surrounding environment. Reports indicate that the pollution from salmon farms contributes significantly to toxic algal blooms and diminished oxygen levels, leading to unhealthy living conditions for the fish.

Despite Wester Ross Fisheries touting a "unique approach" that prioritises animal welfare, the reality portrayed by the video presents a stark contradiction. The family-run business, which was acquired by Norwegian seafood giant Mowi in 2022, markets itself as a champion of sustainable fish farming practices. However, scrutiny is also directed at Mowi, with union representatives voicing concerns about the poor working conditions for employees, including inadequate restroom facilities. Mark McHugh from the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union highlighted the scarcity of toilets, citing examples of facilities designed for unrealistic numbers of workers, which further exacerbates hygiene concerns on the farms.

The growing outcry over this incident coincides with wider discussions about the plight of farmed fish and the industry's environmental footprint. Scottish salmon is the UK's top food export, worth an estimated £800 million annually and supporting thousands of jobs, yet the practices that underpin its production have led to calls for a reassessment of industry standards. Animal welfare groups are advocating for reforms, emphasising that consumers should be aware of the true conditions experienced by fish in farming environments. As the industry grapples with its image and actual practices, the footage serves as a disturbing reminder of the gap between consumer perception and the realities of intensive fish farming.

With public scrutiny intensifying, it may become increasingly difficult for companies to maintain the façade of ethical and sustainable practices without addressing the fundamental issues both within their operations and the broader industry.

### Reference Map

1. First paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171)
2. Second paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171)
3. Third paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171)
4. Fourth paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171), [[5]](https://sentientmedia.org/farmed-salmon)
5. Fifth paragraph: [[3]](https://www.animalsasia.org/us/media/news/news-archive/fish-farming-the-hidden-animal-welfare-disaster-happening-right-under-our-feet.html), [[4]](https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/farmed-salmon/)
6. Sixth paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171), [[2]](https://www.ciwf.com/farmed-animals/fish/fish-welfare/)
7. Seventh paragraph: [[3]](https://www.animalsasia.org/us/media/news/news-archive/fish-farming-the-hidden-animal-welfare-disaster-happening-right-under-our-feet.html), [[5]](https://sentientmedia.org/farmed-salmon)
8. Eighth paragraph: [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171)
9. Ninth paragraph: [[6]](https://www.restlessstories.com/news/whats-lurking-in-farmed-salmon-toxins-parasites)
10. Tenth paragraph: [[3]](https://www.animalsasia.org/us/media/news/news-archive/fish-farming-the-hidden-animal-welfare-disaster-happening-right-under-our-feet.html), [[4]](https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/farmed-salmon/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shock-footage-worker-peeing-salmon-35201171> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ciwf.com/farmed-animals/fish/fish-welfare/> - This article from Compassion in World Farming discusses the welfare issues associated with intensive fish farming. It highlights problems such as overcrowding, which leads to stress, aggression, and physical injuries among farmed fish. The piece also addresses the lack of natural behaviors due to confinement, the practice of withholding food before stressful procedures, and inhumane slaughter methods like suffocation. The article emphasizes the need for higher welfare standards in fish farming and suggests alternatives to intensive practices.
3. <https://www.animalsasia.org/us/media/news/news-archive/fish-farming-the-hidden-animal-welfare-disaster-happening-right-under-our-feet.html> - Animals Asia's article sheds light on the hidden animal welfare issues in fish farming. It details how intensive salmon farming practices lead to overcrowded conditions, making fish more susceptible to disease, stress, and physical injuries. The piece also discusses the environmental impact, including pollution from fish waste and chemicals, and the spread of parasites like sea lice. The article calls for greater awareness and changes in the industry to address these concerns.
4. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/farmed-salmon/> - The World Wildlife Fund's page on farmed salmon outlines the industry's growth and associated environmental impacts. It discusses how salmon farming contributes to biodiversity loss through pollution and chemical inputs, and the spread of diseases and parasites to wild populations. The page also highlights issues like escapes of farmed salmon into the wild, which can affect genetic diversity. It emphasizes the need for responsible practices to mitigate these impacts.
5. <https://sentientmedia.org/farmed-salmon> - Sentient Media's article examines the negative impacts of intensive salmon farming on animal welfare, the environment, and human health. It discusses how crowded conditions in fish farms lead to disease spread and the use of antibiotics, contributing to antibiotic resistance. The piece also covers environmental pollution from salmon farms, including the release of harmful contaminants into surrounding ecosystems, and the escape of farmed salmon, which can threaten wild populations.
6. <https://www.restlessstories.com/news/whats-lurking-in-farmed-salmon-toxins-parasites> - Restless Stories' article explores the environmental costs of salmon farming, focusing on pollution and its effects on marine ecosystems. It details how fish waste, uneaten food, and chemical residues from farms pollute the ocean, leading to algal blooms and oxygen depletion. The piece also discusses the spread of parasites like sea lice from farmed to wild fish, and the escape of farmed salmon, which can disrupt local ecosystems and threaten wild populations.
7. <https://www.ciwf.org/media-news/press-releases-and-media-statements/2021/03/deformities-parasite-infestations-and-high-death-rates-the-murky-depths-of-the-scottish-salmon-industry-exposed-in-new-undercover-investigation> - Compassion in World Farming's press release presents findings from an undercover investigation into the Scottish salmon industry. It reveals widespread animal welfare issues, including deformities, parasite infestations, and high mortality rates among farmed salmon. The investigation highlights breaches in animal welfare legislation and calls for a moratorium on the expansion of Scottish salmon farming. The release underscores the need for urgent reforms to address these systemic problems in the industry.