

Regulating Category 2 and Novel Fish Pathogens

Guidance: LIT 56234

This guidance explains what Category 2 and Novel parasites and diseases (or 'pathogens') are, why the Environment Agency regulates them, and how. Please take the time to read it fully in order to understand what the presence of a Category 2 or Novel pathogen means for you.

Regulating the spread of serious disease

England is free of some of the most serious diseases of fish. It is important to prevent the introduction and spread of fish disease to protect fisheries, fish stocks and businesses.

The Environment Agency and the Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) are both responsible for the regulation of fish disease:

- The FHI regulates fish imports, fish farm premises, and places controls for notifiable diseases.
- We regulate the movement of fish to and from fisheries, and place controls for Category 2 and novel pathogens.

Controlling the movement of fish is a way of preventing the spread of serious diseases - by stopping the transfer of fish known to be infected to other waters. This is how we help to prevent the spread of Category 2 and Novel pathogens.

Category 2 and Novel pathogens

Category 2 pathogens pose a risk of serious harm to fish stocks and the fisheries they support. They are generally not native in the UK, but have become established in some inland waters.

Novel (or 'new') pathogens are also not native and are generally not widespread. Their impacts are either unknown but potentially serious, or known to be highly damaging. These pathogens are usually detected during health checks done to support fish movement activities, or during disease outbreak investigations.

You can find a list of current Category 2 and Novel pathogens on the gov.uk website - there is a link at the bottom of this document. If you hold a Live Fish Movement Site Permit or Supplier Permit, this list can also be found in Annex 3 to your permit.

This list is subject to change based on scientific consideration and detection of Novel pathogens.

Controls for Category 2 and Novel pathogens

Controls for a Category 2 or Novel pathogen apply to all waters within the registered site it was found at, and to all fish species present. Controls remain on a fishery indefinitely, or until remedial action has taken place in agreement with us. The controls are not automatically removed after a period of time, or following subsequent 'clear' health checks.

If a Category 2 or Novel pathogen has been found in an inland water, this has implications for the movement of fish from that site.

Category 2 pathogens

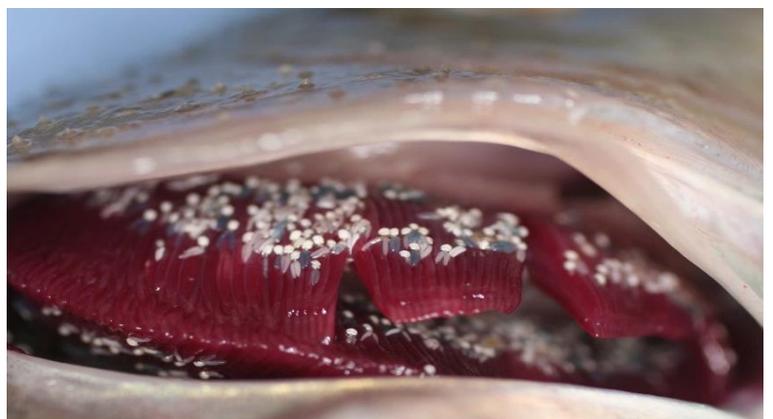
Fish from source waters infected with Category 2 pathogens can only be introduced into still waters covered by, and subject to the conditions of, a Live Fish Movement Site Permit, and where:

- the overriding water type is 'fully enclosed' (as stated on the receiving water Site Permit), or
- Any other type of still water that is already infected with the same pathogen.

Fish from source waters infected with Category 2 pathogens must not be stocked into any other unenclosed water.

Novel pathogens

Fish from source waters infected with Novel pathogens cannot be introduced into any other water. We will refuse applications to remove fish from waters known to be infected, unless those fish are not going to be restocked elsewhere. We may allow them to be removed for other purposes.



Heavy infection of Category 2 parasite Ergasilus sieboldi on the gills of a common bream

Guidance for fishery owners/managers

How you can reduce the risk of introducing serious disease

Stocking fish can be a useful fisheries management tool, but it does increase the risk of spreading disease. If you are planning to introduce fish, always ensure that it is done legally and by a reputable supplier. There is a link to the Gov.uk website at the end of this guide with more information about legal requirements.

Always ask your supplier about the disease status of the fish you are buying, including;

- Whether they have passed a health check
- Whether the fish have come from a source with any controlled pathogens

This is especially important for fully enclosed waters where there is no legal requirement for a health check, and it is legal for suppliers to introduce fish with Category 2 pathogens. We strongly advise against any introduction of fish infected with a Category 2 pathogen or without a valid health check.

If you hold a Site Permit, you are responsible for informing us of any find of a previously unrecorded controlled fish pathogen so your Site Permit can be updated to list the pathogen. This is a legal requirement.

If a Category 2 or Novel pathogen has been found at your fishery

The presence of a controlled pathogen does have implications, but should not stop you from being able to run a successful fishery. Good fisheries management is key to mitigating the risk of disease (such as making sure stock levels are appropriate, and water quality is good) and preventing further spread (good biosecurity). There will be limitations on some fishery management practices you can carry out - such as cropping - but options will always be available. We can provide you with advice and guidance specific to your fishery and the pathogen present.

If you hold a site permit and have notified us of a previously unrecorded controlled pathogen at your fishery this will be varied to include the pathogen and reissued.

Please ensure you make anyone doing fisheries management work at a site with a controlled pathogen aware of its presence and that they apply suitable biosecurity measures.

Guidance for fish suppliers

If you are supplying fish, you must hold a Live Fish Supplier Permit. Your permit sets out conditions that you must comply with when introducing fish - including fish from a source infected with a controlled pathogen. See condition 2.7 of your Supplier Permit.

A list of current Category 2 and Novel pathogens can be found in Annex 3 to your permit. The list is subject to change, and Supplier Permit holders will be notified in writing of any such changes.

If you have applied to us to remove fish from a water, we will contact you if there is a controlled pathogen present. In some cases you will not need our permission to remove fish – in these instances, we will disclose if there are any controlled pathogens present if you contact us – it's vital you know this before planning any work so as to avoid committing an offence. It is an offence to introduce any fish with a Novel pathogen, and any fish infected with a Category 2 pathogen must only be introduced in compliance with the conditions on your permit.

We encourage fish suppliers to be transparent about the health status of fish to potential customers – they need to know if fish come from a source with Category 2 parasites and whether the fish have been health checked – many will ask.

We have a range of factsheets available that include helpful information and management advice for fisheries with Category 2 or Novel pathogens.

A list of current Category 2 and Novel pathogens can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/fish-health-checks. This list is subject to change.

For information about legal fish movements
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-move-live-fish-to-or-from-a-fishery>

For information and guidance on Biosecurity, please see
<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/index.cfm>

If you want to know more or discuss Category 2 and Novel pathogens further, please don't hesitate to contact us:

For technical queries about Category 2 and Novel pathogens: The National Fisheries Laboratory

Phone: 02084 745244 Email: fish.health@environment-agency.gov.uk

For fish movement permissions, enquiries about moving fish with pathogens and enquiries about disease status: The Fish Movements Team

Phone: 02084 745243 Email: fmapapplications@environment-agency.gov.uk