

Biologists studying virus found in Alsea fish hatchery steelhead

Infectious Hematopoietic virus (IHN) has been detected in adult steelhead spawned at the Alsea Hatchery. This virus is occasionally found in other wild and hatchery stocks in the Pacific Northwest; however, this is the first time it has been detected in the Alsea River system. Fishery managers are concerned and are taking steps to minimize risks associated with the discovery.

IHN was diagnosed following a routine sampling of adult winter steelhead that were spawned at the hatchery in late December. The virus seldom causes disease in adult fish; though it can be fatal to juvenile fish. Although the virus can be transmitted from the adult fish to progeny through the spawning process, it appears to happen rarely. IHN is sometimes found in steelhead adults in the Columbia River system, including Willamette tributaries such as the Santiam, McKenzie and Clackamas rivers. This virus is found primarily in salmon and trout and is harmless to humans.

"Our goal is to contain the disease within the adults and not allow it to pass on to their

progeny," said Alsea Hatchery Manager Tim Schamber. "We will test each individual winter steelhead, both male and female and the resultant fertilized eggs will be kept separate. Infected eggs will be destroyed."

Adult female steelhead, which unlike salmon, often survive to spawn in succeeding years, will be released back into the Alsea River estuary.

Consumer Guide to Oregon Insurance Complaints

Oregonians can learn how their insurance company treats its policyholders from the latest edition of the *Consumer Guide to Oregon Insurance Complaints*. The award-winning report, published annually by the Oregon Insurance Division, ranks insurance companies from best to worst based on the premiums they earned in Oregon and the number of consumer complaints received by the division.

"Complaint statistics give consumers another way to measure an insurance company against its competitors," said Kathy Barrie, consumer advocate for the Insurance Division. "A smart shopper looks not only at a company's premi-

ums and financial strength, but also at its complaint record, which is a good indicator of customer satisfaction." The latest report covers complaints closed by the Insurance Division in 1998 in six major lines of insurance: personal auto, homeowner, health, health care service contractors, life, and annuities. In addition to the complaint rankings, the booklet includes tips consumers can use to help make informed insurance decisions and to save money.

Disposition of the males is somewhat more difficult. Steel-

head males who have been spawned cannot be counted upon to return directly to the ocean if released in the estuary. There is a much greater chance they might turn around and head back upriver into the hatchery or natural production areas.

Biologists gave serious consideration to releasing the males in lakes and ponds against insurance companies. The booklet is available on the Insurance Division's Web site www.cbs.state.or.us/ins or a free printed copy can be ordered by writing to: Publications, Oregon Insurance Division, 350 Winter St. NE, Room 440, Salem, OR 97301-3883.

A more detailed report that shows how consumer complaints were resolved is available for \$25. To order a copy of the *Complaint Report, Part II*, send a check payable to Department of Consumer and Business Services at the address above.

where they would continue a long-standing and popular program of expanded fishing opportunities. However, concern about spread of the disease to other watersheds led to the decision to kill and remove the males. Most will be provided to food share organizations. Those in poor condition will be sent to a rendering plant.

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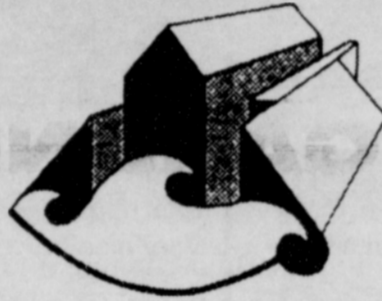
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