
Regional Press Cuttings (DAERA)

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Investigation after hundreds of fish killed in pollution of Camowen River tributary

BY THOMAS MAHER

HUNDREDS of fish have been killed and an investigation is underway after yet another major pollution incident along one of Tyrone's rivers.

The fish kill happened on a tributary of the Camowen river in the Sixmilecross area.

Hundreds of juvenile brown trout were found dead along the Glusha Byrne, and it's feared that approximately two miles of the stream has been wiped out.

The local angling club who spotted this latest environmental disaster said one of their bailiffs had witnessed the devastating damage caused to the

local fishing stock.

It is not confirmed at this time what caused the lethal pollution but the angling group have said an investigation is on-going and they believe that it was caused by agricultural waste.

A spokesperson for the Camowen Anglers Association said, "The committee of Camowen Community Anglers are disappointed to report yet another fish kill that has impacted our club waters resulting in a substantial loss of wild fish stocks.

"The incident has occurred on a tributary of our waters in the Sixmilecross area and details will be announced in due course

as we hope you understand, investigations into the cause are at an early stage."

They added, "One of our club

'...disappointed to report yet another fish kill..'

bailiffs attended and saw first hand the results of the pollution and we are saddened that these incidents are still occurring in this day and age."

The group have said that they intend to try and mount a re-

covery effort along the waterway and will help assist in any clean up operation.

Pollution along the Camowen river was also reported in September of last year, though fortunately in that event there were no reports of any fish killed.

An investigation into this latest incident is ongoing by the Loughs Agency.

Back in 2018, around 15 miles of the Camowen River was affected when a concrete store ruptured, pouring more than 100,000 gallons of slurry into a waterway which leads to the Owenreagh River near Dro-more.

Tyrone farmer who imported illegal antibiotics forced to cull over 150,000 chickens

A TYRONE chicken farmer who had to cull more than 150,000 of his birds after importing an illegal Chinese antibiotic has received a suspended jail sentence.

Paul Lawrence Scott Hobson (60), of Mullybrannon Road, Dungannon, imported an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product, namely Amoxicillin - a penicillin-based antibiotic.

He admitted charges of importing the unauthorised product between July 15 and August 2, 2019, attempting to import similar products between July 1 and October 31, 2019 and obstructing the veterinary medicines regulations by deleting emails regarding the purchases of the illegal products.

At Dungannon Crown Court he was sentenced to nine months in jail, suspended for three years.

Hobson had been one of Moy Park's biggest suppliers, however the company has cut all ties with him. Moy Park immediately took steps to ensure that poultry from Hobson's farm was not sent for human consumption after suspicion of the offences came to light.

Antibiotics can be used for animal welfare reasons but are strictly regulated and should only be prescribed by a vet. They can also be used as a growth promoter to reduce the amount of feed it takes to get a bird to slaughter weight.

But the court was told that Amoxicillin can be a risk to the general public if it gets into the food chain.

Hobson did not receive any of the products therefore none was administered to the chickens. However, as a result of the investigation, 155,000 chickens were culled.

Judge Irvine QC acknowledged that there was no evidence that Amoxicillin was on the defendant's property and the chickens had not entered the food chain.

He gave the defendant credit for admitting the offences thereby saving court time and expense during a pandemic.

A spokesperson for the Depart-



Over 150,000 chickens had to be destroyed as part of the investigation at the Dungannon farm.

ment of Health said the investigation was being led by the Department of Health's Medicines Regulatory Group.

The seizure of the antibiotics was first reported by the Guardian newspaper. In 2019 the Department of Agriculture and

'Members of the public could have been endangered as a result of this unlawful activity.'

the Department of Health jointly launched a five-year plan to tackle the issue of anti-microbial resistance.

Peter Moore, Senior Medicines Enforcement Officer with the Department of Health, who directed the investigation said, "This conviction sends a clear message

that there are serious consequences if a person attempts to by-pass the regulated system and controls which are in place to ensure public safety and integrity of the food chain. Members of the public could have been endangered as a result of this unlawful activity.

"The public, however, can have confidence that the Medicines Regulatory Group and its statutory partner agencies, locally and nationally, will take decisive action to prevent and detect those operating in this manner."

Canice Ward, Head of the Department's Medicines Regulatory Group added, "This was among the largest quantity of unlicensed prescription veterinary antibiotics to be seized in Northern Ireland. The offender in this case acted in a reckless manner by importing products without being able to confirm their actual content, whether they were effective, if they would cause harm to animals or humans, or had been manufactured, stored or trans-

ported under correct conditions. He also ran the risk of potentially harmful drug residues appearing in foodstuffs derived from food producing animals and causing significant risk to human health."

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the most serious threats to health. The Department encourages the responsible use of antimicrobials, particularly antibiotics, in human and veterinary medicine, in food producing animals and in pets. The spread of antimicrobial resistance in the environment is also of increasing concern.

The emergence and spread of drug-resistant bugs is driven by over-use and inappropriate use of antibiotics in both humans and animals.

Antimicrobial resistance to veterinary medicines not only affects human and animal health and welfare, but could also severely affect the agricultural industry as a whole through its potential impact on trade.