

Escaped farm salmon and wild salmon at Dundonnell hatchery, October 2009

1. This photograph of the two anaesthetised cock salmon shows typical differences between farm salmon and wild salmon in the autumn. Note how the farm salmon (top) has rounded margins to its caudal fin (tail) and other fins are slightly less perfect than the wild fish (below). Note that there are also more black spots on the escaped farm fish particularly around the head and base of the tail, which may be related to genetic differences between native wild Wester Ross salmon and farm salmon. Most salmon grown on farms around Scotland are descended from Norwegian strains of fish.



2. Scales from the farmed salmon (left) and wild salmon (right). The scale from the wild fish is very eroded indicating that the fish had ceased feeding many months prior to the sample being taken. During the freshwater phase, the 'circuli' (growth rings) on the farm salmon are slightly further apart than on the wild fish indicated steady growth. However, the transition to marine growth in the farm fish does not result in such a marked change in inter-circuli distance (growth rate) as on the wild fish which shows a sudden transition from very slow growth in freshwater (2 winters can be seen) to rapid growth during its first spring and summer at sea. Thereafter, sea growth is rather obscured on the wild fish, and much of the outer scale is missing.

