

State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Dear Wild Bait Harvester:

As you are likely aware, this past spring, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) was found in fish in several Wisconsin waters. VHS is a serious threat to the health of wild and hatchery fish in Wisconsin, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) have recently enacted regulations to help control its spread. Under the DNR's new regulations and the terms of DNR's wild bait harvest permit, all minnows taken from waters of the state under the authority of a DNR bait dealer license must have a fish health inspection before they are distributed or used.

DATCP emergency rules (Section ATCP 10.645, Wis. Adm. Code) require that a qualified fish health inspector provide a fish health inspection and issue a valid Fish Health Certificate (FHC) that includes a test for VHS on any fish or fish eggs of a species that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has found to be susceptible to VHS before they can be distributed or used by a bait dealer. Minnows currently on this list include: emerald shiners, spottail shiners, and bluntnose minnows. The fish must be held until results of VHS testing are available which generally takes at least 28 days. Please see the internet addresses below for a link to the DATCP rules and the full APHIS susceptible species list. A list of qualified fish health inspectors and their locations can be obtained on the DATCP web page or DNR Wild Bait Harvest page.

DNR emergency rules (Section NR 19.057 (2), Wis. Adm. Code) allow the department to set specific conditions in wild bait harvest permits to prevent or control the spread of the VHS virus. The department has determined that a specific condition of all permits will be that a qualified fish health inspector issue a valid FHC for all other species of fish not covered by the DATCP rules before they can be used or distributed. All inspections must be performed according to chapter ATCP 10, Wis. Adm. Code, including the required qualifications for a fish health inspector. Copies of the DNR rules and other information on bait harvest are available at the websites listed below.

DATCP rules require that within 7 days of the certification, the fish health inspector must send the original completed FHC form and any accompanying test results to DATCP at the address specified on the FHC form. Conditions of the wild bait harvest permit require that the wild bait harvester send a *legible* copy of the completed certificate within 7 days of the certification to the DNR at the following address:

WDNR Fish Health Certificates FH/4
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI, 53707-7921.

Due to legibility problems, faxes will not be accepted.

All wild bait harvest permit holders shall maintain copies of their applicable FHCs and VHS test results for five years from the date the certificate was issued. We also strongly recommend that you provide copies of the appropriate FHCs to the bait dealers or others to whom you distribute the fish.

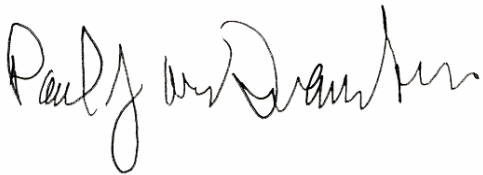
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Fish Health Certificate inspections must follow DATCP requirements for a FHC as stated in ATCP 10.65 as amended by the emergency rule of late October 2007. A "shipment" of fish is defined by DNR's harvest permit to mean fish harvested from a waterbody in the area defined under one wild bait harvest permit (one unique Township/Range combination) in a given day. The fish in that single shipment can be tested as a group, but no other co-mingling of fish may occur. Each species must be tested separately and the FHC applies only to the group of fish harvested on the day of inspection. FHCs normally will be valid for 30 days after date of issue. A FHC will require the inspector to necropsy 20 fish from each batch to look for possible signs of disease or infection.

Remember that all fish must have a valid FHC issued by a qualified fish health inspector *before* they are distributed or used.

Thanks for your assistance in helping to control the spread of this deadly fish disease in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



Paul J. McGraw, DVM, Director
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Bureau of Animal Disease Control



Michael Staggs, Director
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Fisheries Management

Helpful VHS Information on the Internet

DNR VHS Main Page

<http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs/>

DNR Wild Bait Harvest Page

http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs/vhs_wildbait.html

DATCP Aquaculture Page

<http://datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/marketing/val-add/aqua/wynk/index.jsp>

APHIS Website

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/vhs/vhs.shtml