

Salmon escape from fish farm in Sutherland

Thousands of farmed salmon have escaped from a Scourie-based fish farm, Loch Duart Ltd, in Sutherland.



The 6,560 fish, which were nearing maturity, escaped from a large hole in a net from a sea site at Oldany, near Drumbeg.

There have been four incidents of fish escaping from Loch Duart since 2000 involving nearly 45,000 fish.

Scientists have warned that farmed salmon can have a negative effect on the population of wild salmon.

The escapees have the potential to transmit disease and mate with wild stock leading to a contamination of the gene pool.

Nick Joy, managing director of Loch Duart, told the Northern Times: "Weather conditions in the area have been extraordinarily bad and we fear that these conditions may have caused a weakening in an area of the net that a seal then found and tore."

The company has said that it invested in robust infrastructure for the site as it is subject to high peaking waves.

Mr Joy explained: "We acquired the strongest pens we could find and created a high specification net system for Oldany, but it has not been enough.

"Only 20 per cent of the stock remain to be harvested and the site has done well till now. To get so close to the finishing line and then for this to happen is hard to bear."

He added: "It is a given that all at Loch Duart deeply regret this position. It is doubly so when we have already decided to change designs for the next input. In the end there is nothing but to accept responsibility that we did our best and it wasn't good enough."

