

IMPORT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORNAMENTAL FISH

In recent years a number of genetically modified fish have been developed, principally as tools for ecotoxicological research. The fish species involved, zebra danio (*Danio rerio*) and Medaka (Japanese rice fish), (*Orizias latipes*) are also present in the ornamental fish trade. Recently genetically modified varieties of *Danio rerios*, which display vivid fluorescent colours have become available from ornamental fish suppliers.

The release or marketing of any genetically modified (GM) organisms within Great Britain is prohibited unless authorisation has been given under Section 111 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990. There are currently no GM fish authorised for release or marketing in Europe or Great Britain, consequently anyone who releases or markets such fish will commit an offence under this legislation. Marketing includes making the fish available to other persons, whether or not for payment.

It has come to our attention that the authorities in Holland and Germany have recently confirmed the presence of genetically modified danios in their ornamental fish trade. These fish display a uniform red/pink body rather than the blue of a typical zebra danio.

We have become aware that red danios have been made available to the UK trade, and are in the process of investigating whether these fish are genetically modified.

Pending the results of these investigations we are asking that fish importers do not import or market any red danios (or other recently available coloured/fluorescent danio varieties). Once imported, it will be an offence to make available GM fish to anyone else. Any such fish that have been ordered should be held in isolation by importers pending the results of our investigations, which will be reported in a subsequent letter as soon as the results are available.

Anyone failing to comply with this request to suspend release or marketing of potentially GM fish could leave themselves open to prosecution, should any fish they release or market be subsequently confirmed to be genetically modified.

Should our investigations confirm the presence of GM fish in trade, the confirmatory letter will also provide guidance on the prevention of their import, and on disposal of any existing stocks.

Anyone requiring further information, or able to furnish additional information on the availability of coloured danios should contact either:

The GM Inspectorate at the Central Science Laboratory on 01904 462223 or email gm-inspectorate@csl.gov.uk

Or the Fish Health Inspectorate at Cefas Weymouth on 01305 206673/4 or email, fish.health.inspectorate@cefas.co.uk

We thank you in anticipation of your co-operation with this request

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