

I have been conducting land based aquaculture since 1990 and have been involved with the work on getting approval for the importation of the two species approved so far (Beluga and Siberian Sturgeon). As an active fish farm operator for this length of time I have always been aware of any risk from pathogens and parasites of both fin fish and crustaceans. The species I have worked with are rainbow and brown trout, silver perch an Australian native and yabbies. During this time I have never had a virus or other pathogen outbreak. I have had experience with dealing with the Aeromonas fungus which occurs due to low oxygen content, skin damage or excess stocking density and is easily treated. I have my own breeding facility with years of breeding trout and am now working on doing the same with silver perch. High level of cleanliness is essential to having a successful business. This aids in keeping any disease or other problems out of a successful operation. My system is totally land locked some 70 Km from any natural waterway which has led me to realise that the safest way to allow sturgeon to be farmed in Australia is to confine all and any such projects at least 20Km from any natural waterway. My water source is bore or ground water which has been tested to be 100% free of any pathogens or other potential problems and the natural minerals also contribute in a big way to fish health. All water that would be used in a recirculation system with up to 25% replacement would be sterilised after use and then scrubbed for nutrient in a natural wetland before being returned to the aquifer. I would seriously recommend that this type of farming these species be adopted as part of any approval to allow the importation. Since 2012 I have been in constant contact with [REDACTED] who has worked 2 on sturgeon farms in different locations of the Northern Hemisphere. [REDACTED] experience and contact with the industry there has been the source of information used to answer the many questions that determined the initial changing of the act to allow the importation of the two species mentioned above. We are still in contact regularly and he has made preliminary contact with potential investors and markets for the products should importation be approved and allowed. [REDACTED] is available and willing to answer any further questions that may arise during the BIRA process. [REDACTED] knowledge of the husbandry of these fish is invaluable. The one thing I have learned from my years in the business is that operations must be kept as simple as possible for efficiency and security. I have seen complicated ones come and go. I have acted as a consultant to some of them and predicted poor outcomes from the way they had been set up or run. I was called in after construction to help solve problems. Some of these projects involved the spending of millions of dollars plus being aided by (self proclaimed experts) during construction. I have concluded and agree with others that the best way of having a safe prosperous industry is for all and any sturgeon farms to be fully enclosed in lockable facilities using recirculation. This will also exclude the accidental movement of fish or other problems by birds or other animals. There are many other farming operations using such facilities EG chicken farms that work very well in this country that have existed for decades and are successful due to the principals of cleanliness and I see no reason why sturgeon farming would be any different. I know people who own and run such chicken farms and security plus hygiene is high on the priority list. Aquaculture is the same. If very strict virus, disease and pathogen protocols are followed during the importing of stock then I see no reason why problems should arise. Importing eggs only will also lower the risk and cost.