

Swansea students win joint first prize for fish welfare award sponsored by RSPCA Assured

Animal welfare scheme sponsors student awards to help develop a greater understanding of welfare in aquaculture

9 July 2024

Talented Marine Biology students, Ollie Duke, 21 and Lottie Oulson, 22 at Swansea University both achieved top prize for their joint research project on positive measures of welfare in farmed fish.

RSPCA Assured, the RSPCA's farm animal welfare assurance scheme, sponsored the award for the 'Best Dissertation on Welfare in Aquaculture' at Swansea University for the second time.

Lottie and Ollie, were presented with the prestigious award and received a certificate of recognition and a £100 voucher.

The students completed their research projects at Swansea University's Centre for Sustainable Aquatic Research and carried out a practical assignment using Operational Welfare Indicators*, as part of their Aquaculture & Fisheries module.

Lottie and Ollie won the prize for their project on positive welfare linked to dietary choice for Nile tilapia, one of the world's most farmed fish. Their findings indicated that dietary choice might improve fish welfare in an artificial environment, allowing the expression of more natural behaviours.

The project was praised for its potential to open up a promising avenue for introducing new measures for positive welfare on farmed fish.



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Emilie Wix, Head of Farming Engagement at RSPCA Assured, said *“We are delighted to again support these excellent fish welfare projects undertaken by the students at Swansea University.*

“Farmed fish welfare is an important issue and we hope that by sponsoring awards such as this, we can help to encourage the fish industry specialists of tomorrow to prioritise improving welfare standards.

“We are proud that the RSPCA Assured scheme and the RSPCA higher welfare standards for farmed Atlantic salmon and trout have been a catalyst for change for over the last 20 years, and we look forward to seeing what Lottie and Ollie do next.”

The RSPCA’s higher farmed animal welfare standards cover each of the major animal species farmed in the UK, including salmon and trout. All farms on the RSPCA Assured scheme must comply with the RSPCA’s welfare standards which go above and beyond ‘standard’ or typical UK production to ensure animals have what they need for a better quality of life.

Professor Carlos Garcia de Leaniz, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Aquatic Research at Swansea University, said: *“We are excited that Lottie and Ollie have conducted this outstanding research into dietary choice for farmed fish which could lead to higher welfare in the future. They showed excellent knowledge of the challenges faced by the aquaculture industry and we hope they will contribute to improving fish welfare in their future careers.*

“We are grateful for the support of RSPCA Assured by sponsoring this Award which aims to inspire our students to contribute to a greater understanding of how to improve welfare in the aquaculture industry.”

For more information on RSPCA Assured visit: www.rspcaassured.org.uk

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Notes to editor

*Operational Welfare Indicators are ways of assessing animal and fish welfare - done by observing or measuring physical features such as growth rate and condition, or behavioural features, such as curiosity.

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