

Florida's Not-So-Tropical Winter

Large numbers of fish farms in Florida have lost significant numbers of livestock in the recent cold weather.

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There isn't much good news for Florida tropical fish farmers this month. They've seen one of the worst cold snaps on record evolve into persistent cold weather, and fish stocks, both wild and farmed, are being hurt badly.

Several areas in Florida have experienced record cold conditions, including several prolonged overnight freezes in some places. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation closed several fisheries in response, and some reports state that wild fish populations have been decimated, with floating and washed-up fish carcasses appearing in numerous locations.

Temperatures have turned up since the worst of the cold snap, but conditions are still lower than normal in several parts of the state. Persistently low temperatures can stress fishes to the point of death, even if freezes aren't happening each night.

I've heard a wide range of fish stock loss estimates, with one upper range estimate coming in at 75 percent losses across the board.

I suspect we'll have to wait to see how bad the freeze will ultimately prove to be for Florida tropical fish farmers. Some may be driven out of business due to livestock losses.

For fish farmers already facing stiff competition from overseas and headwinds in the larger aquatics industry due to the economic contraction, this latest blow is likely to further strain already damaged businesses.

Hopefully, the aquarium hobby itself won't suffer too much from the loss of new fishes, but I doubt this will be the case. Good luck, Florida fish farmers. May the weather, and your luck, turn.

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