

Nelson Aster

Fish Farm Technician

Career Description

A fish farm technician helps to grow and cultivate fish and maintain fish farm premises and equipment.

Interview

The idea of farming fish has always made good sense to Nelson Aster.

“Ever since I was young, I figured, ‘Why go out and catch fish? Why can’t we just hold on to the fish and grow them?’” explains Nelson, who grew up in the small community of Kitkatla, near Prince Rupert. Today he lives that dream working as a fish farm technician at a salmon farm off the coast of Vancouver Island.

“At the moment we’re growing Atlantic Salmon,” explains Nelson, who lives at the farm with another technician and the site manager during their Thursday-to-Thursday shift every other week. “There are about 30,000 fish in each of our 18 pens. It takes about 18 months from the time the fish enter the farm here until we harvest them.”

On a typical day, Nelson spends the morning checking water quality and feeding the fish. His afternoon consists of a full inspection of the farm to ensure that all nets and equipment are secured and well maintained. He also keeps accurate computer records of everything that happens on the farm each day.

“The best part is seeing how much the fish grow every month and knowing that you are taking part in that growth cycle,” reflects Nelson. “And I love working outdoors on the water.”

Nelson’s job offers a tremendous amount of variety. Indeed, what other job allows you to operate a microscope, boat, underwater camera, forklift and computer all in the same day! Fish farms tend to be situated in remote marine locations, so first aid, boating safety and the ability to operate a marine radio are all important skills.

“I really appreciate how much the fish farm industry provides employment for so many coastal communities,” concludes Nelson. “The future looks very promising.”

Key Quote

“The best part of my career is seeing the fish grow every month and knowing that I am taking part in that growth cycle. I love working out on the water.”

Ask Nelson: What classes can I take now to prepare?

“The most important class you can take in high school is biology. And mathematics will apply when you are feeding the fish because you need to calculate the number of fish in each pen and their average weight to determine how much to feed.”

Primary Location

- Vancouver Island/Coast

Interests/Skills

- Applied biology
- Basic mechanics and electronics
- Outdoor work environment
- Marine safety
- Observation and record keeping

Suggested Qualifications

- Diploma or Certificate in Aquaculture

Education and Training Options

- British Columbia Institute of Technology, Burnaby
- Malaspina University College, Nanaimo
- North Island College, Campbell River

Related High School Subjects

- Biology
- Mathematics
- Technology Education

Related Careers

- Fish Health Specialist
- Fish Farm Manager
- Marine Biologist
- Shellfish Harvester

Did you know?

- British Columbia accounts for 43% of Canada's total aquaculture production, ranking it #1 in the country. (Source: Statistics Canada, 2004)