

Taking forward discussions on animal welfare and ethics within the International Whaling Commission

(Submitted by the UK)

1. Proposal for an Animal Welfare and Ethics workshop prior to IWC63

Although the Commission's membership continues to be divided over the extent of the IWC's animal welfare mandate, the Small Working Group identified that there is 'no disagreement on whether animal welfare is important'¹ and member states are broadly able to unite behind a common objective of minimising animal suffering.

We invite contracting Governments views on a proposal to hold a dedicated Animal Welfare and Ethics workshop prior to IWC63. The primary objective of such a workshop would be to collate knowledge on the current status of animal welfare science and management policies globally, and allow expert discussion and analysis of such information. The resulting report would afford the Commission an insight into the international context of its animal welfare deliberations and would enable it to promote best practice in all forms of human-whale interactions, e.g. whale watching, lethal and non-lethal research, as well as whaling.

The workshop could invite expert participants and its Terms of Reference include the collation and discussion of information on the following:

- Science and policy development in animal welfare;
- National animal welfare legislation and policies;
- Regional animal welfare legislation and policies (e.g. EU);
- International animal welfare agreements and guidelines (e.g. Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, World Organisation for Animal Health);
- National, regional and international policies on the use and welfare protection of animals in research;
- Animal ethics theory and applied animal ethics;
- Application of international animal welfare principles to the IWC.

In the event that the Commission, at this meeting, adopts the recommendation in IWC62/7 to form a Management and Compliance Committee which would, inter alia, 'review information and documentation available with a view to advising the Commission on whale killing methods and

¹ IWC S08/Rep1.p.9

associated welfare issues;’ and ‘recommend and facilitate establishment of subsidiary bodies as necessary, including, for example, the Whale Killing Methods Working Group;’, this Committee could be called upon to review the findings of the workshop and provide recommendations to the Commission plenary.

The UK would be happy to convene the proposed workshop and report back at IWC63.

Background

Animal welfare has been identified as a Category ‘A’ issue requiring resolution in the Future of the IWC process. A number of questions and observations have been raised by contracting governments:²

- (a) whether animal welfare falls within the IWC’s mandate;
- (b) whether reporting of animal welfare data from whale hunts should be voluntary or mandatory;
- (c) the relationship between animal welfare and the Revised Management Scheme (RMS), including whether the provision of data should be mandatory and whether minimum conditions should be set under which whales could be killed;
- (d) the perception of some that data provided from whale hunts are used in a negative manner rather than being used for constructive discussion on how to improve killing methods;
- (e) whether the IWC’s focus should not just be on welfare issues associated with whale hunting, but also on those associated with other anthropogenic factors (e.g. entanglement, strandings).

IWC/61/6 states: ‘There is an institutionalized IWC working group that has made progress in addressing concerns regarding *animal welfare*, but there are issues that need to be resolved during the interim period related to collection, provision and use of data.’ IWC62/7 further proposes that, amongst other critical issues, further work on animal welfare and ethics be undertaken at IWC63 and IWC64 in relation to the Commission’s reform.

It is our hope that the work by the Commission on animal welfare and ethics at IWC63 and IWC64 can seek to address and objectively evaluate fundamental questions and differences of opinion on these issues, with an objective to take informed decisions which unite members behind commonly agreed principles and guidelines on the humane management of whales.

² IWC/S08/Rep1