

NORWEGIAN MINKE WHALING 2007

By

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In Norway only one whale species is targeted, namely the minke whale, that is traditionally hunted with small fishing vessels that are rigged for whaling in the season. After it is dead, the whale is hauled on board across the deck and butchered. Meat, blubber and other products are stored in ice in the hold until they are brought to processing plants in land.

Harpoon guns of calibres 50 mm and 60 mm equipped with the Norwegian penthrite grenade developed in 1997-1999 (IWC/55/WK17, IWC/58/WKM&AWI 25) are used for the hunt. Rifles with full metal jacket, round nosed bullets with a minimum calibre of 9.3mm, are used as back-up weapons (IWC/55/WK15, IWC/55/WK17). The gunners are required to pass obligatory shooting tests, both with rifles and harpoon guns. Prior to the hunt the boats are controlled and approved for hunting by inspectors from the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries and the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. At-sea monitoring is carried out by the Electronic Trip Recorder (Blue Box) developed in 2001-2005 (IWC/57/RMS/8). In addition inspectors from the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries are conducting periodic and random checks of the hunting activities. Some years observers under the NAMMCO International Observation Scheme are present on board during the hunting season.

In 2007, 597 whales were taken by 29 vessels. Four whales (0.6 %) were reported lost after they were dead. No whales were reported to have escaped wounded. During the season two inspectors from the Directorate of Fisheries were present at sea and on land. No violations of national regulations for hunting methods were reported.

Research and developments on whale killing methods

Research on improved hunting and killing methods for whales has been conducted in Norway since 1981, with the most active research periods being 1981-86, 1992-95 and 1997-2003 (IWC/58/WKM&AWI 25). Detailed data on the performance of the different killing methods used during these time periods have been collected for scientific purposes for 5552 whales and reported to the IWC. From 1992 to 2007, twenty-seven extensive reports and publications have been presented to, and discussed in, five workshops organized by the IWC, in addition to annual reports. In 1981-83 when cold harpoons were used the percentage of animals recorded dead within 1 minute was 17%. The average time to death (TTD) was more than 11 minutes with a high rate of re-shooting (IWC/TC36/HK1). The results from 2000-2002 with the new penthrite grenade showed that at least 80% of the whales were rendered unconscious or dead instantly. The average TTD was about 2 minutes using the criteria adopted by the IWC (IWC/33/15), which may include periods when the animal may have been unconscious or already dead (IWC/47/18, IWC/51/12, IWC/58/WKM&AWI 21). Very few animals (0.5%) needed a second shot.

Information on improvements of whaling operations

The Norwegian research and development on hunting and killing methods for whales has been carried out for nearly 25 years. The efforts have resulted in the adoption of improved whaling methods and regulations for several species of whales. Following the recommendations of the "IWC Action Plan", Dr. EO Øen has continued his co-operative work with hunters, scientists, authorities, and whale hunters' organisations in Norway, USA (Alaska), The Russian Federation (Chukotka), Greenland, Canada (Nunavut and Nunavik) and Iceland and assisted in the teaching and training of hunters and transferred knowledge, developments and technology derived from the above mentioned research in order to improve the hunting methods and hunting gears used for marine mammals. Norwegian scientists have also chaired workshops and lectured in local and international workshops (NAMMCO) and training sessions for hunters of marine mammals. Norway plans to continue these cooperative efforts,