

## **NORWEGIAN MINKE WHALING 2006**

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 before it is brought to processing plants in land.

The current hunting weapons are 50 mm and 60 mm harpoon guns equipped with the Norwegian penthrate grenade developed in 1997-1999 (IWC/55/WK17, IWC/58/WKM&AWI 25). 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 inspection is carried out by the Electronic Trip Recorder 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 2006, 546 animals were taken from 28 vessels. Four whales were reported lost after they were dead. No whales were reported to have escaped wounded. During the season 4 inspectors from the Directorate of Fisheries were present at sea and land. No violations of national regulations 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 during 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 more than 5550 whales and reported to the IWC. From 1992 to 2003, twenty-six 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 penthrate 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.

The Norwegian research and developments on hunting and killing methods on minke whales and some other species has been carried out for nearly 25 years. The last project on minke whales sponsored by the Norwegian Research Council was concluded in 2003 and new projects on hunting of minke whales are not planned at the time being. However, the performance of the gunners and hunting equipment will still be controlled randomly or by periodic checks.

### **Information on improvements of whaling operations**

The Norwegian research and developments has enabled the authorities to adopt new regulations for the whaling operations. Following the recommendations from the "IWC Action Plan", Dr. EO Øen of Norwegian School of Veterinary Science has continued his co-operative work with hunters, scientists, authorities, and whale hunter's organisations in Norway, USA (Alaska), The Russian Federation (Chukotka), Greenland, Canada (Nunavut), and Iceland and assisted in the teaching of hunters and transferred knowledge, developments and technology derived from the above mentioned research in order to improve hunting methods and hunting gears. He has also chaired and lectured in local and international workshops (NAMMCO) and training sessions for hunters of marine mammals together with Dr. SK Knudsen. This co-operative work from Norway is planned to be continued.