

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

The Committee on Hunting Methods met on 26 and 27 January 2005 from 9:15 to 16:30 and 09:00-10:45 in the Faroe Islands Representation in Copenhagen. Present were Jústines Olsen, Chair, (Faroe Islands), Ole Heinrich and Mads Brinck Lillelund (Greenland), Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland), Egil Ole Øen (Norway), and Christina Lockyer and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

1. - 3 Introductory Remarks, Adoption of Agenda and Appointment of Rapporteur

The Chair of the Committee, Jústines Olsen, welcomed the Committee members to the meeting. The draft agenda was adopted and Charlotte Winsnes was appointed as rapporteur.

4. Updates on hunting methods in member countries

The lists of laws and regulations in member countries (NAMMCO/HM/2005-3), and of references on hunting methods (NAMMCO/HM/2005-4) were updated (see Appendices 1 and 2 of this report).

Faroe Islands

Olsen (Faroe Islands) reported that there had been no changes in the regulations for pilot whale hunting in the Faroe Islands this past year. Olsen informed the Committee that an incident involving some young hunters taking up the old tradition of killing adult seals with wooden clubs had resulted in a statement by the authorities that this method is a violation of the law on the protection of animals. The law has only one regulation directly governing the hunting of seals. This regulation states that shooting seals and other large sea animals with a shotgun is not allowed. The interpretation and practice in the Faroe Islands is thus that you may only hunt seals with a rifle in which case you need to get a licence.

Olsen furthermore informed the Committee that trials are still being conducted with the new knife developed for the pilot whale hunt.

Greenland

Lillelund (Greenland) reported that the new Executive Order no. 2 of 12 February 2004 on Protection and Hunting of Beluga and Narwhal was implemented 1 March 2004. The first quota year is from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. The quotas set for narwhal and beluga are less than 50 % of recent harvest levels, but are still above the catch level recommended by the Scientific Committee. Another stipulation of the Executive Order is that boats over 42 feet in length may not participate in the hunt for beluga and narwhal and they may not function as a mother-ship (flensing area at sea). Lillelund also presented the Committee with a copy of the mandatory hunting report form that the hunters must fill out when an animal is hunted.

The Executive Orders on walrus, polar bears and small cetaceans were not finalised in 2004 as originally planned. In 2005 the Department of Fisheries and Hunting will have increased resources (an additional staff member) and it is hoped that the work with the Executive Orders will gain momentum. Pending the decision on whether or not the Executive Orders will be sent out for new public hearings, it is difficult to predict if the orders will be finalised and implemented in 2005 or 2006. It is planned to regulate the catch of these species through quotas.

In 2004, 141 whale grenades were sold in Greenland, and two courses on how to handle the grenades and the harpoons were held for hunters. Lillelund noted that the price of the grenade has decreased and at the same time the subsidy from the Department of Fishing and Hunting has decreased. Furthermore, in 2004 the quota for the rifle hunt of minke whales was reduced. The catch figures for 2004 were as follows:

In West Greenland 179 minke whales were taken of a quota of 180, 13 fin whales were taken of a quota of 19 and in East Greenland 9 minke whales were taken of a quota of 12.

Lillelund distributed a copy of PINIARNEQ 2005 to all committee members. This is a booklet giving information on hunting seasons, laws and regulations, registration forms and hunting statistics for the period 1998 - 2003.

Iceland

Loftsson (Iceland) informed the Committee that 25 minke whales had been taken in 2004 under the scientific whaling programme that had started in 2003. The hunting method used is the same as in Norway, and because no whales have been hunted since 1985, Dr Øen was called in to hold a course in 2003 on how to use the Norwegian grenade (Whale Grenade '99). The rifles used as secondary weapons or backup were the same calibre as in Norway (.375 and .458). Loftsson drew attention to the Workshop on Hunting Methods for Seals and Walrus in Copenhagen in September 2004, in which hunting methods for seals in Iceland had been presented.

Norway

Øen (Norway) noted that in Norway quota regulations on seal and whale hunting are revised every year. At its last meeting in November 2004 the Marine Mammal Council (*Sjøpattedyrrådet*) decided to review and improve the existing regulations on seal hunting methods (*utøvelsesforskriften*). This work should have been finalised before the commencement of the 2005 season, but has been postponed a year.

Øen informed the Committee of the ongoing work with the “Blue Box” system. Briefly sketched, the Blue Box is a trip recorder, a tamper-proof automated computing system designed to independently monitor and log the activities associated with data on certain events on board provided by different sensors, including independent GPS, shock transducers, strain transducers, heel sensors located in different places on a vessel that independently or in sum indicate or prove that a whale is shot and taken on board. The system is configured and calibrated for each individual vessel. The system is automated with programs designed for the continuous operation and logging of data for minimum 4 months with backup batteries and automatically restarting function following system interruption. The mandatory logbook is an important part of the overall system. Prototypes have been tested for three seasons and during the 2004 season 13 out of 34 whaling vessels were equipped with the “Blue Box”. Based on the data and results from the 2004 season, the system has been upgraded, and for the 2005 season the plan is to install a “Blue Box” on all whaling vessels. National inspectors will still be present on some boats in 2005 to monitor its function and from 2006 it is anticipated that the system will be fully operational, and national inspectors will only make random inspections on board vessels.

Implementation of the “Blue Box” system will ease some of the unnecessary and unintended restrictions of the current monitoring system. It provides a lower cost alternative bringing the hunt back to the traditional opportunistic “good weather” hunt and still secure that the harvest fit within long-term resource conservation targets and sustainable goals. It takes no space, it does not sleep, eat, and does not socialize with anyone. The system probably saves cost of an estimated 6 million NOK every year.

5. Update on the Recommendations from the Workshop on Hunting Methods, 9-11 February 1999.

The Chairman asked the members to present the status of the follow-up to those recommendations from the 1999 Nuuk workshop that were not finalised at the last meeting.

Recommendation 3a: *“The workshop recommends that Greenland initiates studies in co-operation with the hunters, testing both pointed and blunt bullets on whale carcasses to determine the best ammunition for use in the hunt.”*

The fulfilment of this recommendation is awaiting guidelines on shooting tests on dead animals. The shooting tests took place in September 2004 in the Faroe Islands. The work with the guidelines for standardising methods on how to perform the shooting tests must be completed before the tests can take place (see also Item 6 in this report.).

Recommendation 3b: “*The Workshop recommends that Greenland develop objective descriptions of hunting methods, equipment and how efficient these are in small cetacean hunting, considering regional variations.*”

The Committee has in a previous meeting noted the following:

Such descriptions, to be all inclusive of the various hunting methods and regional variations in Greenland would be a major effort to produce. The descriptions would have to be created in co-operation with the hunters in the different regions of Greenland, and must be adapted to the different hunting methods. Jessen suggested that Greenland could start with a set of main points that would cover the different methods and the different regions. The Committee agreed to this idea and noted that such descriptions would also be an important contribution to the cultural history of Greenland (NAMMCO Annual Report 2002: 64).

The three workshops held in 1999, 2001 and 2004 produced a lot of information pertaining to this recommendation. It was deemed important to find out what descriptions already exist and hence what needs to be done. The Committee tasked Lillelund (Greenland) with the responsibility of going through the reports with the aim of making a recommendation on how best to move this work forward.

Recommendations under 4, Baleen whale hunting pertaining to Greenland:

Heinrich (Greenland) informed the Committee that the price on the penthrite grenade to Pilersuisoq a/s (the retailer) from the producer has been reduced for 2005. At the same time the Home Rule Government has reduced their subsidy by the same amount, so in effect the price the hunters have to pay for the grenade is unaltered from 2004 to 2005. The price cut from the producers reflects the fact that the development costs have been paid off. Ideally the price from the producer in Norway should be the same in Norway and in Greenland. Even when taking freight costs and import taxes into account, the price difference between Norway and Greenland should be minor. In Greenland the prices were:

2004: price to retailer DKK 4 517, price to the hunters: DKK 6 625

2005: price to retailer DKK 3 549, price to the hunters DKK 5 625

Because the Home Rule Government has reduced their subsidy with the same amount as the reduction in price into the retailer, the hunter must pay DKK 6 625.

For comparison the prices in Norway were: 2004: NOK 2595 and 2005: Not decided

6. Update on the Recommendations from the Workshop on Ballistics Sandefjord 13 -15 November 2001

At its 11th meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland in February 2002, the Council agreed to the Committee's recommendations:

- To develop guidelines for methods used to undertake more controlled and standardised studies of the effect of different weapons and ammunition on different species.
- To harmonise weapons and ammunition types for different species with due considerations to variation in hunting conditions in the different countries.
- To focus on seals and seal hunting.

Olsen (Faroe Islands) noted that with respect to the first recommendation, an essential part of this task was the shooting tests conducted in September 2004 in the Faroe Islands. A first step will be to describe the trials, what kinds of results were obtained and determine what conclusions can be drawn from these trials. However, in order to make guidelines one needs to make a very thorough

and detailed description that takes into account all aspects of such a trial from how to perform autopsy and inspection of wounds and bullet paths to what sort of equipment is necessary for labelling heads and bodies. Ammunition has also to be tested with respect to shots from different angles and distances. The development of the guidelines will build on the experiences from the shooting tests and represents the second and final step in meeting this first recommendation.

Olsen and Øen will finalise the description of the shooting tests that took place in the Faroe Islands and present this document to the Council at its meeting in March this year. The second and final phase of the work will presumably be ready for presentation to the Council at the next annual meeting in 2006.

With respect to the second and third recommendations, the Committee postponed the discussion to the next item on the agenda, since the Workshop in question was convened as a response to these recommendations.

7. Workshop on Hunting Methods for Seals and Walrus, 7-9 September 2004.

The Workshop on Hunting Methods for Seals and Walrus was held in Copenhagen 7 – 9 September 2004. The terms of reference for the workshop were:

- To review existing seal and walrus hunting methods known.
- To evaluate methods used in seal and walrus hunting in relation to killing efficiency and struck and lost rates.
- To examine possibilities for technical innovation and further enhancement of efficiency and safety of hunting methods, with a view to providing recommendations for improvement, where relevant, and
- If possible, determine minimum requirements for safe and efficient killing of walrus and different seal species, considering variations in hunting methods.

The Committee discussed the draft Report from the Workshop making some minor editorial changes that are reflected in the final version of the Workshop Report. The Committee emphasised the importance of the procedure by which the recommendations had evolved. At the outset of the Workshop a Drafting Committee had been established with representative participation from the Workshop participants. The Drafting Committee was tasked with developing a set of draft recommendations based on the presentations and the discussions at the Workshop. These draft recommendations were then presented to the workshop participants and discussed one by one, revised if necessary, and adopted by consensus.

The Committee emphasised the importance of obtaining more reliable information on rates of struck and lost in walrus and seal hunts, and of reducing the rates of struck and lost. To this end the Committee recommended that the member countries take special note of the relationship among hunters' safety, technical innovation in developing new equipment and hunting techniques, and the need to establish minimum requirements for firearms and ammunition for seal and walrus hunts in order to reduce struck and lost rates.

The report from the Workshop will be presented to the Council at its meeting in March 2005. As part of the presentation, Øen and the Secretariat will make a table depicting both what the hunters regard as functional weapons and ammunition in regard to the different hunts, and the existing laws and regulations pertaining to this in the specific hunt.

8. Future Work of the Committee

The Committee agreed on the following future priorities:

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- To finalise the work on standardising guidelines for methods used to undertake more controlled and standardised studies of the effect of different weapons and ammunition on different species. The work is two-fold, first to present the report of shooting trials on heads of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands in September 2004 to the Council at its meeting in March 2005, and second to finalise the guidelines to be presented to the Council at its meeting in 2006.
- To convene a workshop on struck and lost in whale- and seal hunting, tentatively in the autumn of 2006, bearing in mind the three previous NAMMCO Workshops in 1999, 2001 and 2004 arranged by the NAMMCO Hunting Committee. The aim will be to elucidate and to analyse the problem of struck and lost in whale- and seal hunting and make very specific recommendations on how to reduce this problem.
- The Committee reiterated its intention of collecting the proceedings from all hunting method-workshops held by NAMMCO in one publication. Taking into account the plan to convene a new workshop in 2006 the Committee proposed to schedule the publication in order to include the upcoming Workshop on Struck and Lost. The Committee was of the opinion that the workshops represent a significant amount of relevant and valuable information, and the publication would be built upon the results from all four Workshops organised by the Committee.

9. Election of Officers

The Committee elected Egil Ole Øen (Norway) as its Chair and Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland) as Vice-Chair, both for the next two years (2005/2006). The outgoing Chair, Justines Olsen had held the position since 1998, and the Committee thanked Olsen for his able chairmanship during many years.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

11. Approval of the Report

The report was approved through correspondence on 11 February 2005.