

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

The Committee on Hunting Methods met on 11 and 12 January 2006 from 9:00 to 16:00 and 09:00-13:00 in the Faroe Islands Representation in Copenhagen. Present were Egil Ole Øen, Chair (Norway), Jústines Olsen, (Faroe Islands), Amalie Jessen (on 12 January, agenda items 4 (partly) and 7), Ole Heinrich and Fernando Ugarte (Greenland), Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland), and Christina Lockyer, Daniel Pike and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

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

The Chair of the Committee, Egil Ole Øen, welcomed the Committee members to the meeting. The draft agenda was adopted with two amendments, the meeting documents were reviewed and Charlotte Winsnes was appointed as rapporteur.

Fernando Ugarte was especially welcomed as a new member of the committee. Øen noted that the Committee was expanded because of agenda item 4: Workshop on Struck and Lost. In future preparatory meetings connected to the Workshop this group of people would therefore be referred to as the Organising Committee for the Workshop.

2. Updates on hunting methods in member countries

The lists of references on hunting methods (NAMMCO/HM-January 2006-2), and laws and regulations in member countries (NAMMCO/HM-January 2006-3) 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 eight of the new knives developed for the pilot whale hunt had been produced and distributed. Furthermore a new longer knife (55 cm) had been developed for use on stranded northern bottlenose whales. An incident with euthanasia of a stranded bottlenose whale where for safety reason riffle could not be used had demonstrated the need for a longer knife for these whales in such circumstances.

Greenland

Ugarte (Greenland) reported that two new Executive Orders had been implemented in 2005: no. 10 of 13 April 2005 on hunting of large whales and no. 21 of 22 September 2005 on protection and hunt of polar bears.

There are three polar bear stocks in Greenland. For 2006 a quota of 150 animals has been set based on past catch history. This quota is lower than the average of previous years and lower than the total catch from the last few years. In the future the regulations on the polar bear hunt are to be set in consultation with relevant international bodies, Canada and the hunters themselves. The specifics of how this process will be have not yet been finalised.

The Executive Orders on protection and hunt of walrus and small cetaceans have been delayed. The walrus executive order is expected to be approved and in place in the first half of 2006.

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 was from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. The quotas set for narwhal and beluga were less than 50 % of recent harvest levels, but were still above the catch levels recommended by the Scientific Committee. In October 2005 the 2005/2006 quota on narwhal was raised by 50 animals. This was a political decision on behalf of hunters and municipal authorities, which believe that the numbers of narwhals observed in Ummannaq fjord during the autumn should be able to sustain larger quotas.

Iceland

Loftsson (Iceland) informed the Committee that 39 minke whales had been taken in 2005 under the scientific whaling programme that had started in 2003. The hunting method used is the same as in Norway.

Norway

Øen (Norway) noted that in Norway quota regulations on seal and whale hunting are revised every year, and that the regulations for 2006 are still under preparation.

With reference to the new electronic monitoring system for electronic surveillance of the Norwegian minke whaling, a trip recorder or “Blue Box” system (for description see last years Committee report), Øen informed the Committee that the developmental phase was completed and no major modifications are expected before it is implemented as a legitimate method for inspection on all boats from the 2006 whaling season on. The analysing tools still need some elaboration and adjustments, but judging from the analysis of data from the 2005 season so far (approximately 50 % of the whaling fleet) all hunted whales are being registered and no violation has been registered. Øen has written a report on the system to the IWC that he will also send to NAMMCO.

3. Updates on recommendations from previous workshops (1999, 2001 and 2004)

The Chair asked the members to present the status of the follow-up to those recommendations from the different workshops that were not finalised at the last meeting.

From the 1999 Workshop in Nuuk:

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.”*

As noted in the report from last year 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 5 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 previous meetings noted the following:

From NAMMCO Annual Report 2002: p. 64: 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

From NAMMCO Annual report 2004: p. 51: 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

Due to changes in personnel in 2005 this work has not commenced, but Greenland will try to readdress the question in 2006. Through the work with the executive order on polar bears, interviews are being conducted and one could use this opportunity to also include questions about other species. Furthermore a study on climate change is planned for 2007 and here questions about the hunting of marine mammals might also be incorporated.

Recommendations under 4, Baleen whale hunting pertaining to Greenland:

The price from the producer in Norway should now be the same in Norway and in Greenland (approximately NOK 3000).

From the 2001 Workshop in Sandefjord:

Recommendations:

1) To develop guidelines for methods used to undertake more controlled and standardised studies of the effect of different weapons and ammunition on different species.

Olsen and Øen will present a document to the Council meeting in March 2006 (item 5 below).

2) To harmonise weapons and ammunition types for different species with due considerations to variation in hunting conditions in the different countries and

3) To focus on seals and seal hunting.

The Workshop on Hunting Methods for Seals and Walrus held in Copenhagen 2004 was convened as a direct response to recommendations 2 and 3 above.

From the 2004 Workshop in Copenhagen:

The recommendations from this workshop were very general, and as such not easily convertible into action. One direct result however, is the planned Workshop on Struck and Lost that will be held in Copenhagen in November 2006.

Generally the Committee recommended that all member countries review the various recommendations to check whether those pertaining to a certain country have actually been implemented in that country's laws and regulations.

4. Workshop to address the problems of Struck and Lost, Copenhagen 14 – 16 November 2006.

Winsnes gave an update on the present status of preparations. The meeting room has been confirmed at Nordatlantens Brygge in Copenhagen for the period 14 to 17 November 2006. In the anticipation that this Workshop will be similar to the one in 2004 the budget has been tentatively set to NOK 500 000. A more precise budget will be developed after this meeting. Based on previous experience the most costly items are meeting facilities (rental and interpretation equipment), interpreters and travel support.

Indigenous Survival International has indicated that they will contribute with some funding and applications will be sent to Nordic Council of Ministers - NMC- (Committee on Fisheries) and NORA. After consulting with the secretary and the chair of the Committee of Fisheries (NMR) the understanding is that they are positive but will not give any promises before having defined the financial needs of a big Conference being planned for 2006 under the auspices of the NMC. Clarification on funding from NMR will therefore probably not be available before March.

NAMMCO at its last annual meeting last year allocated NOK 100 000 to the Workshop. However, given that the financial situation is still somewhat uncertain, the Committee agreed that they would ask the NAMMCO Council for an enlarged financial reassurance for the Workshop.

The Workshop fee will be differentiated between representatives from organisations and private persons/students, and the Workshop will be open for all interested in attending. The "open door" policy, which has always been the rule in previous workshops, has never caused any problems. On the contrary the Committee agreed that it has always been beneficial to be open and honest about the issues at hand.

Øen emphasised the importance of having representation from Chukotka, Canada (both Arctic and Atlantic) and Alaska. Participation from Chukotka most probably requires that we pay for their travel and accommodation. Even though this is costly the Committee agreed that the Workshop would gain much through their contributions.

Based on background document NAMMCO/HM-January 2006-4 Draft proposal for the Workshop, the Committee had a thorough discussion on the various aspects of the

Workshop programme, format and possible speakers. Appendix 3 of this report gives a compilation of what was agreed upon.

The Secretariat was tasked with contacting the proposed speakers etc, sending out invitations as soon as the preliminary programme was finalised, in addition to the overall management of the preparations for the Workshop.

The next meeting of the Organising Committee will be a telephone meeting scheduled for the end of May.

5. Guidelines for methods to undertake controlled and standardised studies of the effect of different weapons and ammunition on different species

Document NAMMCO/HM-January 2006-5 had been prepared by Olsen and Øen and was presented to the Committee for comments. Olsen explained the background for the paper and Øen went through the paper in detail.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- New title: "*Shooting trials on heads of dead pilot whales. Guidelines to test the efficiency of rifle ammunition used for hunting and euthanasia of small whales*"
- Move table 1 under paragraph Results
- Under paragraph Draft Guidelines give more detailed information under each item
- Some minor editorial changes conveyed to the authors directly.

The paper will be presented to the Council at its meeting in March as a direct follow up of recommendations made at the workshops in 1999 and 2001 (see item 3 above).

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held in Copenhagen in January 2007.

7. Any other Business

7.1. Greenland bans import of seal products

In response to pressure from animal welfare groups like the Human Society of the United States (HSUS) and following reports on the Canadian seal hunt in the Danish television news, the Greenland government (Landstyre) issued an import ban on sealskin from Canada on 6 January arguing that the killing methods were not acceptable.

The Committee viewed the report on video and felt it pertinent to issue the following statement to the NAMMCO Council to rectify the allegations made in the television news reports.

The NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods held its annual meeting in Copenhagen 11-12 January 2006. During the meeting the Committee was informed about recent reports about the Canadian seal hunt in the Danish Television news (DR 1, 5th January 2006 at 18:00 hr), in which it was stated that thousands of seals are skinned alive while

fully conscious after being clubbed. In response to these allegations the Committee drew attention to the following.

The Committee hosted a workshop in September 2004 where hunting methods for seals and walrus around the world were discussed and evaluated in detail. Hunters, managers and researchers participated in the workshop. Hunting methods in Canada were presented in detail, and research on the killing methods showed that 98% of young seals shot with rifles were killed instantaneously, and that clubbing with a “hacapik”, when properly used, was probably even a more effective and humane killing method for young seals (NAMMCO Workshop on Hunting Methods for Seals and Walrus, pp.57-60). This high rate of stunning is most likely as, or more effective than, stunning methods commonly used in slaughter houses.

Reflex movements are common in all animals after they have been stunned, but are especially prevalent and long-lasting in marine mammals. Swimming reflexes are stereotypical movements of recently killed seals. These reflex movements can continue for several minutes after the seal is dead, and are characterized by vigorous lateral movement of the body. The presence of these movements has often been wrongly interpreted to indicate that the seal is still alive and conscious and therefore “skinned alive.”

7.2. Recent focus on killing methods for minke whales

There is interest in developing alternative killing methods for minke whales in Greenland today. Especially with respect to the rifle hunt, the development of alternative methods would be beneficial. The time seems optimal because the medium sized whaling boats carrying harpoon canons are old and may soon be condemned. The trend is that the new fishing fleet will consist of either smaller or much larger boats.

Bearing in mind that the development of new weapons and techniques are very time- and resource consuming the Committee nevertheless encourages innovation in hunting methods that takes into consideration both the safety of the hunter and the killing efficiency for the animal.

8. Adoption of report

The report was approved through correspondence on 23 February 2006.