

**REPORT OF
THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS**

The Committee on Hunting Methods met on 19 and 20 November 2014 at the Greenlandic representation in Copenhagen. Present were Eyþór Björnsson, Chair and Guðni Magnus Eriksson (Iceland), Egil Ole Øen, Kathrine Ryeng and Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), Jústines Olsen, (Faroe Islands), Nette Levermann (Greenland), and Christina Lockyer and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

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

The Chair of the Committee, Eyþór Björnsson, welcomed the Committee members to the meeting. Björnsson could only participate on 19 November and the vice-chair, Nette Levermann, chaired the meeting on 20 November. The draft agenda was adopted and Charlotte Winsnes acted as rapporteur.

2. Updates on hunting methods in member countries

The lists of references on hunting methods (NAMMCO/HM-November 2014-2), and laws and regulations in member countries (NAMMCO/HM-November 2014-3) were updated (see Appendices 1 and 2 of this report).

Faroe Islands

Olsen (Faroe Islands) informed the meeting that as of November only two minor drives of pilot whales had taken place in 2014. In addition, a few bottlenose and sperm whales had stranded.

The whaling season attracted unusually high attention from anti-whaling activists. On three specific occasions, activists had interfered with the whaling activities, resulting in people being fined and deported out of the country. One specific incident, scheduled to go to court in March 2015, resulted in Sea Shepard being accused of violating both the whaling regulations and the animal welfare law.

The drawing of the blade of the spinal lance described in the Executive Order on pilot whale hunting from 2013 has been revised with respect to the dimensions of the blade. Olsen also informed the meeting that 200 new blades are being produced in Japan and these will be distributed to all designated whaling bays in the beginning of 2015. Training of hunters based on the NAMMCO manual on pilot whale hunting will take place from January to March 2015. From 1 May 2015 it will be a requirement to use the spinal lance, and the old whaling knife is only allowed to be used after the whale is killed in order to bleed the animal.

The Committee took note of the information presented by the Faroe Islands. It noted that there seemed to be no plans for collecting TTD data and this was unfortunate. The Committee once again emphasized the importance of following the recommendations from the expert group on killing of small cetaceans (NAMMCO 2011) on how to measure TTD if and when this is undertaken. The Committee also commended Justines Olsen for his work with the manual on pilot whaling,

Greenland

Levermann (Greenland) informed the meeting that there is a revision to the Executive Order regulating the hunt on large whales (2013) pertaining to the hunting period for minke whales. The new hunting period is March to November. The change in period is reflecting an alteration in observed behavior of the minke whales.

Greenland set national quotas for large whales in 2013-2014 based on the advice from the IWC Scientific Committee.

The 2014 quotas for West Greenland are: 178 minke whales, 19 fin whales, 10 humpback whales, 2 bowhead whales and East Greenland: 12 minke whales.

There were 40 approved whaling boats with harpoon guns and 425 smaller boats were active in whaling activities in Greenland in 2013.

Whale catches in 2013 were:

- 9 fin whales
- 166 minke whales including 9 struck and lost in West Greenland and 4 in East Greenland with 2 struck and lost.
- 7 humpback including 1 struck and lost.
- 268 beluga in West Greenland (quota 330) and 26 in Qaanaaq (quota 20; technical, 5 year quota is given for 100 animals).
- 122 narwhales in West Greenland (quota 144), 83 in Inglefield Breeding (85; technical, 5 year quota of 485 animals), 70 in Melvin Bay (quota 81) and 65 in East Greenland (quota 88).
- 47 walrus in West Greenland (quota 60), 65 in Northwater (quota 62) and 8 in East Greenland (quota 18).

The catch numbers for beluga narwhale and walrus includes stuck and lost without specifying the actual numbers of S/L.

There are no quota regulations on other small cetaceans or pinnipeds in Greenland.

By catches:

- 1 minke whale, male, 7.8 meter, wounded/sick was permitted euthanized in Aasiaat. Not included in catch data above, October 2013.
- 1 bowhead whale near Aasiaat (no length given) observed entangled in fishing gear for crabs, June 2013. Not found again.
- 1 humpback whale female near Qeqertarsuaq, 10.64 meter, entangled in fishing gear for crabs was permitted euthanized, June 2013.

The hunting period for 2013-2014 was for fin whale and humpback whale from 1 January to 31 December and for minke whale and bowhead whale 1 April to 31 December.

Five single observations of a sperm whale stranding were made in 2013 of which two were in open water.

In 2013, there were 6 reported infractions of national legislation on large whales. The infractions were related to the use of minke whale grenade for fin/humpback whale and cold harpoon used for minke whale as secondary weapon. Also reported, as infraction was the sale of whale products without prior stamping of sale license and hunting without proper license.

NAMMCO had an observer in Greenland in 2014 on the West Coast.

The Committee was informed that Greenland had submitted a document to the IWC this year displaying all IWC resolutions of concern for and referred to by Greenland in their dealings with the IWC.

The Committee acknowledged that there are an inherent dilemma both for hunters and authorities with respect to regulations and animal welfare concerns related to the hunting and killing of large whales like fin and humpback whales. There have been incidents where the hunter has used a rifle or a minke whale grenade as a last resort (as secondary weapon) to kill the animal. Furthermore, the take of fin and humpback whales are so small in numbers that the hunters consequently are unable to accumulate a lot of experience and practice.

The Committee took note of the information presented by Greenland.

Iceland

Eriksson (Iceland) reported that there had been no new regulations on hunting of fin and minke whales the last year.

Minke whaling

The quota was 229 animals. There were two boats operative but these did not operate at the same time. Hunting period was from 30 April to 14 October. Due to bad weather and technical problems with the boats only 24 minke whales were caught.

Fin whaling

The quota was 154 animals of which 137 animals were caught including three struck and lost. There were two boats operative. Hunting period was from 16 June to 30 September. No infringements were reported.

Iceland collected TTD data in the 2014 season including post-mortem examinations. Due to bad weather and technical problems with the hunting vessels, it was only possible to get enough data on the fin whale hunt. Iceland hope to collect TTD data on minke whales in 2015. The data were collected after the Norwegian standard and are now being processed and analyzed in Norway. The plan is to present the data to NAMMCO in 2015 – see agenda item 4 below.

National inspections were conducted on a random basis for both hunts.

In Iceland the whalers have to pay for the license to hunt, in order to cover the price of inspection. To give better predictability and also encourage whaling the license period was increased from one to five years.

The Committee took note of the information presented by Iceland.

Norway

Ynnesdal (Norway) reported that there had been no new regulations with respect to hunting of whales or seals in 2014. The TTD data collected in 2011 and 2012 are in the final stage of analyses and will be presented to NAMMCO in 2015 – see agenda item 4 below.

Whaling

2014 had been the best whaling season for years. 736 minke whales were caught including five stuck and lost of a quota of 1286. 23 licenses were given for the 2014 season of which 21 vessels participated which is an increase of 3 boats from 2013. The hunting period was from 1/4-25/9, no infringements reported.

Last year the Committee was informed about a planned seminar on safety and maintenance of harpoon canons organised by the Minke Whalers Association and Vessel owners. This seminar never took place due to lack of finances.

Sealing

2014 had also been the best sealing season for years. Three vessels were active in the West Ice, mainly in Greenlandic waters 7116 adult animals were caught of a quota of 21.270 adult animals. The hunting season was from 10 April to 30 June but all vessels were back before 17 May. No infringements were reported and all vessels had national inspectors on board. The national inspectors oversee and control that the hunting methods are in accordance with regulations and they also control the quality of the meat.

In Norway the authorities encourage the whalers to increase the hunt and thus there are no fixed dates for the end of the hunting season. The marketing of the meat is the responsibility of the hunters and the marked – not the authorities. Last year “Merkevareforeningen” was established with the aim of increasing the home marked for whale meat. The idea is to critically review and establish standards for all steps in the process on how the meat is handled after the kill and until it is in the shops, and defining quality standards for the different parts of the whale meat. Most hunters have joined the Merkevareforening.

The seal hunt differs in that it is 80 % subsidised by the authorities. The big question in Norway now is whether this will be the case in the years to come.

The Committee took note of the information presented by Norway.

3. Handbook/user manual

Presented under this agenda item were documents:

- NAMMCO/HM-November 2014-4 draft of the manual on small whale hunting in Greenland.

The presented document was drafted based on the last telephone meeting held 14 May 2014.

The Committee discussed the document thoroughly, going through the manual page by page editing text and deciding on illustrations, and the final structure of the manual.

Levermann and the Secretariat were tasked with finalising the manual in accordance with decisions made by the Committee.

The Committee commended Nette Levermann for her dedicated work on this manual.

4. Expert group meeting for presentation of TTD data

Norway and Iceland have collected TTD data and these will be ready for evaluation in 2015. Norway collected data from the minke whale hunt in the seasons 2011 and 2012. Iceland intended to collect data from both the minke and fin whale hunts. Due to weather conditions and technical problems with the hunting vessels, collection of TTD from the minke whale hunt was not possible. TTD from the fin whale hunt was collected and are being processed and analysed in 2014 and can be presented to NAMMCO in 2015.

The Committee discussed various frameworks for a possible evaluation of the TTD data. It was agreed to recommend to Council that NAMMCO organise an expert group meeting in line with the one held in 2010. The meeting will review and assess large whale killing methods. Hunting nations like USA, Canada, Japan and Russia will be invited to present their TTD data on large whales also. The following terms of reference was agreed upon:

The expert group meeting shall undertake a review and evaluate the whale killing data submitted to NAMMCO by member countries and associated hunting nations, as well as data and information on recent and ongoing research on improvements and technical innovations in hunting methods and gears used for the hunting of large whales.

Anticipated duration of the meeting is two days and suggested venue is either in Copenhagen or in Reykjavik, in November 2015.

The Committee also identified a preliminary list (not exclusive) of experts for consideration:

Robert Suydam or Craig Gorge, North Slope – Alaska hunt
Lars Walløe – physiology and statistics
Hidioko Solvang - statistics
Lars Folkow – diving physiology

Glenn Williams – killing in general
Ishikawa – veterinarian
Paul Jepson – veterinarian dealing with stranding animals UK

Awaiting the deliberations of Council the Committee closed this agenda item.

5. NAMMCO 22 follow up

NAMMCO 22 tasked the Committee to organise a seminar on data collection, processing, analysis and presentation of TTD data. The request forwarded in recognition of recommendations arising from several expert group meetings on killing of large and small cetaceans. The method of collection and reporting of TTD should be similar for all member countries in order to facilitate comparisons between similar hunts and also between years to detect possible improvements in TTD. The Norwegian method was recommended as the standard where possible.

The Committee agreed to organise a very practical, hands on seminar where the participants would be able to process actual data as an exercise. Some introductory lectures like how and what data to collect, how the collected data is processed/qualified so that it can be fed into statistical programs, description of the statistical methods etc. will be proceeded by a practical session. In the practical session participants are expected to work with particular data sets and to actually do an analyse and present the outcome in a standarasied manner. Output could be a 1-2 page technical description on how to analyze the raw data.

Tentatively a two-day educational seminar is planned with participation from member countries but with the possibility for associated countries to take part if desirable. The idea is to hold this back to back with the expert group meeting described in agenda item 4 above.

The Secretariat was asked to seek the advice of Lars Walløe with respect to how the transfer of knowledge regarding statistical methods and presentation could best be done in such a seminar.

6. Election of officers

Nette Levermann (Greenland) was elected as chair for the period 2015- 2017. Guðni Magnus Eriksson (Iceland) was elected as vice-chair for the period 2015 -2017. The Committee thanked the outgoing chair, Eypór Björnsson (Iceland) for his efficient and professional leadership.

7. Next meeting

The next ordinary meeting in the Committee will be Friday 6 February 2015, back to back with the Annual meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland.

8. Any other business

Greenland raised the issue of reviving the workshop on handling, processing and utilisation of hunted marine mammals that had been on the agenda in 2009. It was

suggested that a new angle could be to look at the issue in the frame of the ongoing initiative marine mammals and food security.

The Committee agreed to revisit the issue at the next meeting, after having conferred with their homeland. The Committee asked the Chair and Secretariat to come up with a proposal for a program.

Olsen informed that representatives of Taijii had approached the Faroe Islands on its killing method with the lance. Olsen had also been invited to attend a meeting organized by students from outside Taijii that will take place in Taijii in the end of November. However as this meeting will not be attended by the hunters from Taijii, Olsen had declined to participate.

During IWC 65 informal discussion were held between NAMMCO and representatives from the Japanese Agency of Fisheries and the mayor of Taijii related to a possible workshop on hunting and killing methods in the whale hunt in Taijii. No conclusions were reached but the NAMMCO Secretariat agreed to provide a tentative programme and budget for such a workshop prior to NAMCMO 23.

9. Approval of the Report

The report was approved by correspondence on 23 December 2014.