

Brief report on improvement of slaughtering method in dolphin drive fisheries in Taiji, Japan during the years between 2000 and 2009.

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1. Back ground

During 52nd annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission, Scientific Committee (IWC/SC) in Adelaide, Australia in 2000, a certain NGO displayed the video footprint of drive fishery operation in 1999 in Futo, Itsu city, Shimoda, Japan. Slaughtering method in that footprint was not so sophisticated and promoted severe criticism anti those fisheries. After the IWC/SC meeting, Fishery Agency of Japan (FAJ) requested activities for improvement of dolphin slaughtering method. However, drive fishery operation in Futo was not as important as that in Taiji. Therefore, National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries and Taiji Fisheries Cooperative Union started the experiments for those purposes in Taiji. It was expected that improvement would prevent criticism anti fishery and ensure the safe operation for engaged fishermen.

2. Consideration on previous slaughtering methods for driven dolphins and livestock.

We compared the existent killing methods for dolphins caught by drive fishery and those for livestock, in order to elucidate requirement for the efficient and safe slaughtering method.

Previous method in Taiji (before 2000 year)

Drive fishery in Taiji is licensed to hunt seven species including false killer, southern finn short-finned pilot whales, Risso's, bottlenose, striped, spotted and Pacific white-sided dolphins. Fishermen drove dolphins to a small cove and closed its mouth with net. In most cases, slaughtering process started early in the morning of the next day of the drive. To avoid the presence of unnecessary gallery, fishermen tried to finish the slaughtering process as early as possible. Fishermen threw fence (Figure 1, approximately 1m in length) from the small boat to dolphins swimming inside the net. Fishermen aimed the neck region of the dolphins (they considered it vital part), however it was difficult to hit it. Most dolphins died of bleeding. In average, it took approximately five minutes to slaughter a striped dolphins. The reason why Taiji drive fishermen threw the fence was to avoid injury from struggling dolphins. Once there occurred the accident that a fisherman, who kept holding the fence after hit, was injured by the fence and on his face because a dolphin struggled. After this process, the beach water was dyed with blood and it sometimes remained until afternoon. Fishermen tied short ropes (approximately 1m in length) on tails of dead dolphins on the beach and carried dolphins to a boat having flat deck (Figure 2) approximately 200m off the beach. On the boat deck, fishermen incised almost median line of dolphins, extracted viscera and washed off the blood with sea water. And then, fishermen carried viscera and carcass to the fish market. In general, carcass was processed to fishbar and meat. In the case for smaller species such as striped and spotted dolphins, carcass was sold as is. Viscera were sold as is for all target species.

Previous method in Futo (before 2004 year)

Drive fishery in Futo is licensed to hunt four species including false killer whale, bottlenose, striped, spotted and Pacific white-sided dolphins. Fishermen drove dolphin schools into the Futo harbor and closed the mouth of the harbor. Slaughtering was carried out in the daytime. Fishermen hooked bloodhook and drew the dolphins to secure the short ropes on tails of the dolphins. Hooks were not as blunt as those in the Faroe Islands (see later part). Fishermen hauled five dolphins with ropes to the pickup truck waiting on the berth using a derrick boom of a fishing boat. The pickup truck carried dolphins to the fish market of the harbor. In the market, fishermen slaughtered dolphins cutting cervical blood vessels with ordinary knives. Data for time to death