



TWENTY SEVENTH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

3 - 4 April 2019, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| DOCUMENT 12 | REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH, ENTANGLEMENTS AND LIVE STRANDINGS (BYCELS) |
| Submitted by | BYCELS |
| Action requested | <p>Take note of the report including workplan and consider the recommendation on data reporting.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Standardising the National Progress Report to include all data requirements for all committees <p>Workplan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To finalise the tables for reporting on by-catch, entanglement and strandings with the aim of being able to identify where the problem is and what it is in order to make recommendations on mitigation ✓ Develop guidelines on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to euthanise live stranded animals ○ How to take samples from stranded animals ○ General guidelines on how to disentangle in the Arctic ✓ Look into how stranding networks can be set up |
| Background | |

1. MEMBERS AND MEETINGS

BYCELS held one physical meeting on 30 November 2018 and one skype meeting jointly with Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) and Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM) on 14 March 2019 since NAMMCO 26.

Committee members: Guðni Magnús Eiríksson (Iceland), Kathrine A. Ryeng and Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), Nette Levermann (Greenland) and Signar Petersen (Faroe Islands).

Outgoing Chair: Kathrine A. Ryeng

Incoming Chair: Guðni Magnús Eiríksson

The next meeting is scheduled for 2019, date to be confirmed.

2. OVERVIEW OF MAIN DISCUSSIONS AND DECISONS

1.1 Standardising of data requests and submission

BYCELS had agreed to prepare an overview of the extent of by-catch, entanglement and disentanglement, live and dead strandings in member countries. Discussions have focused on standardising the information requested from member countries, to expand the current National Progress Reports (NPR) submitted by member countries annually to the SC, to include information required by all committees.

In a joint effort BYCELS, CHM and CIO are developing an excel file covering the data categories (catches, by-catch, strandings, ship strikes and hunting and national inspection efforts) and are working on identifying the data requirements within these for the use of all the committees. It is underlined that this template is a working document that needs further consideration by the SC and especially the SC WG on By-catch.

1.2 Guidelines

BYCELS agreed at the last meeting to review IWC guidelines and others (Norwegian guidelines) on by-catch, including entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings with the aim of identifying procedures and actions for recommendation to NAMMCO members. The overall goal would be to make practical guidelines on how to tackle the problems. Greenland raised the issue of developing easily accessible guidelines for practical use for wildlife officers and hunters.

The IWC guidelines provide principles and guidelines for trained personnel to safely and effectively respond to reports of entangled live whales at sea. The objective of an entanglement response is to remove all detrimental entangling gear safely from the whale and learn as much from the entanglement as possible to ultimately prevent entanglements from occurring. Actions by untrained persons can worsen an entanglement and put human lives at risk. Therefore, the IWC and David Mattila do not give detailed instructions on how to actually disentangle but state that specific disentanglement procedures should be addressed through a thorough and strict training programme.

Greenland and Norway have both organised this training programme lead by Mattila, and it was agreed that BYCELS should develop NAMMCO general disentanglement guidelines that are tuned into Arctic conditions.

Other guidelines discussed were how to euthanise and sample stranded animals. Norway has recently developed guidelines on euthanasia of live stranded cetaceans, as well as guidelines on how to response to whales entrapped in fish farm cages, and to manage an entanglement situation of large whales that would be useful as a basis for developing NAMMCO guidelines.

1.3 Member countries reporting on by-catch, entanglement and live strandings

Faroe Islands

Fishing vessels have to report everything they catch and if they catch marine mammals, they should specify which species. However, there is no systematic and controlled reporting of by-catch in the Faroes, but there is incidental reporting of different cetacean species by-caught. It is therefore difficult to know the level or extent of by-catch. There is no gill net fishing in shallow waters (usually representing a high risk for by-catch) but there are other fishing gear taking different species of marine mammals. Minke whales have been by-caught in trawls and pinnipeds in longlines.

Fishermen report via an electronic logbook or an ordinary logbook that goes to the Ministry. From 2019 it will be only electronic logbooks in use. Reporting of strandings are sent to the Museum of Natural History on a voluntary basis. Reporting of lost fishing gear is mandatory.

Greenland

All catches are reported annually to PINIARNEQ by self-reporting. In addition, every marine mammal taken under license (this entails all whales and walrus, for seals only hunting permit and no license is required) must be reported by hunter or the responsible person (captain of the harpoon boat or the chosen leader in the collective hunt) through the Særmeldingskjema. This form should be submitted to the municipal authorities shortly after the hunt and is later forwarded to the Ministry the is required to fill out a reporting form (.).

The report includes information about the hunter, his license and boat, description of the weapon used to kill the animal, serial number of the grenade in the case of a large whale, it gives information on species, catch area and different kinds of biological data depending on the species e.g. for large whales: flensing place, body length, sex, reproductive state of females, stomach contents, weight of edible products and estimated time to death (TTD). Cases of struck and lost are also reported.

Regulations require entangled and stranded large whales and narwhal and beluga to be reported immediately to the Ministry. Only the large fishing vessels have electronic logbooks – all others report via ordinary logbooks. The buyer/traders presently have an obligation to report by-caught marine mammals.

The 2011 stranding course developed a protocol for strandings and looked at how stranding networks could be set up. Greenland has a very long and uninhabited coastline resulting in sporadic reporting that will never really depict the extent of strandings. Incidents should be reported, and it is the responsibility of the municipality to deal with it. Typically, if the condition of a stranded animal permits it will be towed out at sea to be carried away with the stream.

The Ministry developed a procedure for entangled and stranded whales that has been publicly available since 2011 but has generated few responses.

In 2016 a disentanglement course was organised for wildlife officers lead by David Mattila. Disentanglement equipment were bought and placed in different regions.

There has been an increase in humpbacks being entangled in pond net (cod fisheries). In Greenland by-caught animals that are euthanised must be distributed for free without any moany involved. For whalers and fishermen this represents bad business, as they receive a small payment for killing the animal and at the same time ruining their own market.

Iceland

Reporting of whale caches is mandatory and based on hunters self-reporting and by inspectors when these are active. Reporting by fisheries are via electronic logbooks for the large vessels

(larger than 15 meters) and by an app for smaller vessels.

Presently the reporting is only for catch but the authorities are looking into ways of incorporating by-catch. There is an increasing focus on by-catch initiated by the US requirement but there is no system in place yet. Reporting of by-catch is encouraged but it is not mandatory.

Harbour porpoises are often by-caught in lump sucker net and represents a problem for the fisheries.

Reporting of lost fishing gear is mandatory. Strandings are reported to the Marine Institute on a voluntary basis.

Norway

Reporting of by-catch is mandatory, but fishermen do not comply with this. So far, Norway has not used inspector to oversee by-catch. Small cetaceans are by-caught in gill nets and revised estimates are underway for the harbour porpoises calculated using the reference fleet. Large cetacean entanglements (humpbacks and killer whales) in purse seines nets and gill nets have increased in Northern Norway since 2012, due to the seasonal overwintering of spring spawning herring in the fjords. As a result of this the Directorate of Fisheries arranged a disentanglement course for operative personnel both from the Directorate's Sea Unit and the Coast Guard in 2017. The course was held by David Mattila. The Directorate has also developed an Action plan on how to handle different events involving large whales, including live strandings, whale in fish farm cage, and entanglements. Regarding entangled or entrapped whales in purse seine nets, the Action plan clearly states that the whales have priority over the catch of the fish.

The Institute of Marine Research has an ongoing project looking at the possibility of using pingers to prevent harbour porpoise by-catch in the Reference fleet. Pingers have been used with success by other countries, and it will be investigated if it is feasible to introduce this in the Norwegian fleet. It is known that seals can be triggered by the pingers as they see them as food bells. Pingers for large whales exists but have not been a success.

There is currently no stranding network in Norway or routines for investigation and sampling of stranded cetaceans or pinnipeds. Strandings are reported on a voluntary basis.

The Directorate of Fisheries have for 30 years had a programme to remove lost fishing gear along the Norwegian coast. Today there exists an app for reporting. Lost fishing gear that "continue to fish" represents a by-catch and entanglement problem besides being a conservation issue. Fishermen are supposed to report to the Directorate the position where they have lost gear.

1.4 Workplan 2020 - 2019

BYCELS reiterated the focus areas of their work and identified the following workplan for 2019 - 2020

- Look into how stranding networks could be set up
- To finalise the tables for reporting on by-catch, entanglement and strandings with the aim of being able to identify where the problem is and what it is in order to make recommendations on mitigation
- Develop guidelines on
 - How to euthanise live stranded animals
 - How to take samples from stranded animals
 - General guidelines on how to disentangle in the Arctic