

## GUIDELINES FOR THE EUTHANASIA OF LIVE STRANDED CETACEANS

## 1. GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

Definition of euthanasia: the use of humane techniques to induce the most rapid and painless and stress-free death possible (AVMA 2013).

From an animal welfare point the pain and suffering of live stranded cetaceans could be ended by euthanasia, and should be considered. These guidelines pertain to such events.

**ALWAYS call the responsible authority. Specify telephone number!! Further: Identify relevant responsible authority for animal welfare issues related to marine mammals.**

- Do not act before responsible authorities have been notified, and necessary permission granted
- Only authorized personnel should perform euthanasia
- Human safety is the 1<sup>st</sup> priority. A whale may move the tail or pectoral fins with great force
- Action (euthanasia, disentanglement or moving of animals) should not be initiated in a hasty manner due to expectations from the public
- The police must always be notified if weapons are used

A stranded whale is defined as a whale that is laying on land or in shallow water. The general rule is that such animals should be euthanized and no rescue operation should be conducted.

When a large whale, such as members of the rorqual family (fin whale, minke whale and humpback whale), sperm whale, killer whale or a beaked whale is stranded on the beach or in shallow water it is assumed that they are already sick or weakened for some reason. Due to its weight, attempts to pull the animal out to sea will inflict wounds and injuries. For animal welfare reasons, **the animal should not be pulled out to sea**. It should either be allowed to die on its own, or euthanized if it could be done in a responsible manner from an animal welfare perspective.

Responsible euthanasia require knowledge of the anatomy of the species and which weapons are the most effective. Euthanasia is only responsible when conducted by competent personnel and with suitable weapons.

## 2. KILLING METHODS

Stranded whales or whales that are entangled beyond rescue can be killed by explosive grenades, explosives, heavy calibre rifles and drugs. However, methods for the euthanasia of large whales by drugs are not sufficiently developed, and should not be used.

## 2.1 EXPLOSIVES

Explosive harpoon grenade/perilite grenade can be used only on large whales (all baleen whales plus killer whale, beaked whale and sperm whale) out at sea or in shallow waters where it is possible to approach the animal with a vessel with harpoon gun (shooting distance within 30 – 50 meters). **The shot shall be aimed towards the thorax from the side** as shown in figures 1, 2, 3 and 4. When used correctly the animal will in most instances die immediately.