

COUNCIL MEETING 32  
Theme session: Welfare

Report from the Marine Mammal  
Welfare Workshop 2025



Ichiro Nomura  
*Workshop Chair*

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# MARINE MAMMAL WELFARE WORKSHOP

24 MARCH 2025  
Fram Centre, Tromsø  
(Chair: Ichiro Nomura)

# NAMMCO founding principles

- ✓ People's right to hunt and utilise the marine mammal resources
- ✓ Embedded in this right: the obligation to ensure that the hunt is sustainable and **conducted responsibly with respect to killing efficiency, hunter's safety and animal welfare.**



## Committee on Hunting Methods in 1992/1998

ToRs

- provide advice on hunting methods for those species of marine mammals relevant to NAMMCO member countries.
- ensure that such advice is based on the best available scientific findings, technological developments and traditional knowledge, with due consideration given to safety requirements, animal welfare, efficiency in hunting gears and efficiency of utilisation.

# Good welfare outcome criteria according to NAMMCO

## Good welfare outcomes in hunting:

- ✓ Minimising pain, distress and suffering during hunting process
- ✓ Minimising killing time, balanced by consideration of hunter's safety and risk of losing animal

## Factors defined by NAMMCO as important for good welfare outcomes:

- ✓ Time to death (incl. instant death rate)
- ✓ Animal's awareness
- ✓ Rate of Struck and Lost
- ✓ Hunters' skills and training
- ✓ Weapon adequacy and maintenance

# Marine Mammal Welfare Workshop (MMWWS)

- The right of using marine mammals, comes with the obligation to conduct the hunt sustainably and transparently, but also responsibly in terms of hunters' safety and best possible welfare outcomes.
- Co-organised by NAMMCO and the Fisheries Agency of Japan

Focus of the workshop → status of animal welfare outcomes and how to cooperate to minimise animals suffering as much as possible.

# Goals of the MMWWS

1

Assess the **status of welfare in the different marine mammal hunts**, including of the level of our knowledge on animal welfare outcomes

- Welfare outcomes in the different hunts
- Improvements made in the last decades
- Areas needing improvements

2

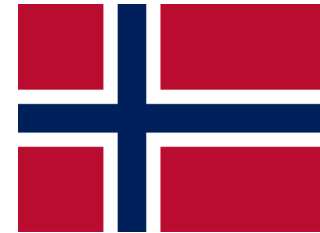
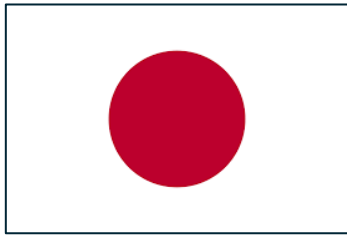
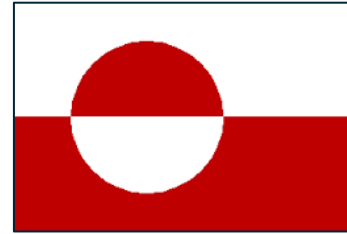
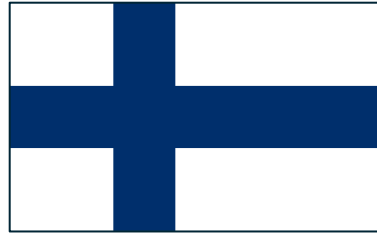
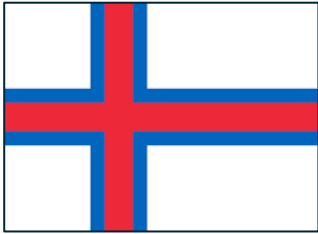
**Consider the optimal welfare criteria** to be applied in monitoring welfare outcomes

3

Identify **how to move forward** to globally improving welfare outcomes

- Learn from each other
- Prioritising efforts: best welfare-cost
- Progress in establishing best practices
- Increase trust and cooperation

# Participants of the MMWWS: 11 hunting communities



# Review of the Recommendation by CHM WS and EG

## Recommendations for the different hunts regarding:

- ✓ How improving welfare outcomes
- ✓ Monitoring welfare outcomes
- ✓ Weapons adequacy and maintenance
- ✓ Training and education of hunters
- ✓ Data requirements – knowledge gaps
- ✓ Hunters' involvement
- ✓ Regulations

### Recommendations to:

- ✓ Hunters
- ✓ Managers
- ✓ Countries

*The more hunting is practiced in a country, the greater the likelihood of that country receiving recommendations*



## Importance of monitoring and continuing monitoring hunt efficiency & welfare outcomes

- Provides information on killing efficiency and animal welfare
- Essential to improve hunting practices
- Ensures that the hunt is carried out according to laws and regulations
- Provides information relevant for an effective management of the stocks
- Provide feed back to hunters, so they can improve

**TTD, IDR, S&L**

# Importance of training and education: improve safety and animal welfare

- Training material and programme appropriate to the specific hunts and the condition
- Theoretical and practical information
- Exchange of experience between hunters
- Included explanation on the required data sampling
- Regular and season evaluation

## Important Data Requirements:

TTD, IDR, S&L

Hitting locations

Standardisation of terms

## Hunters should be involved in:

Decision-making processes, including development of regulations

Development of new hunting gear

Development of monitoring programme

Development and implementation on how to reduce S&L

# Work at the MMWWS

- All participant countries were asked to fill in a database with information on the hunts prior to the workshop
- The following summarises the information reported by the 11 participating communities




# Information on hunts – top 3 catch 2019-2023



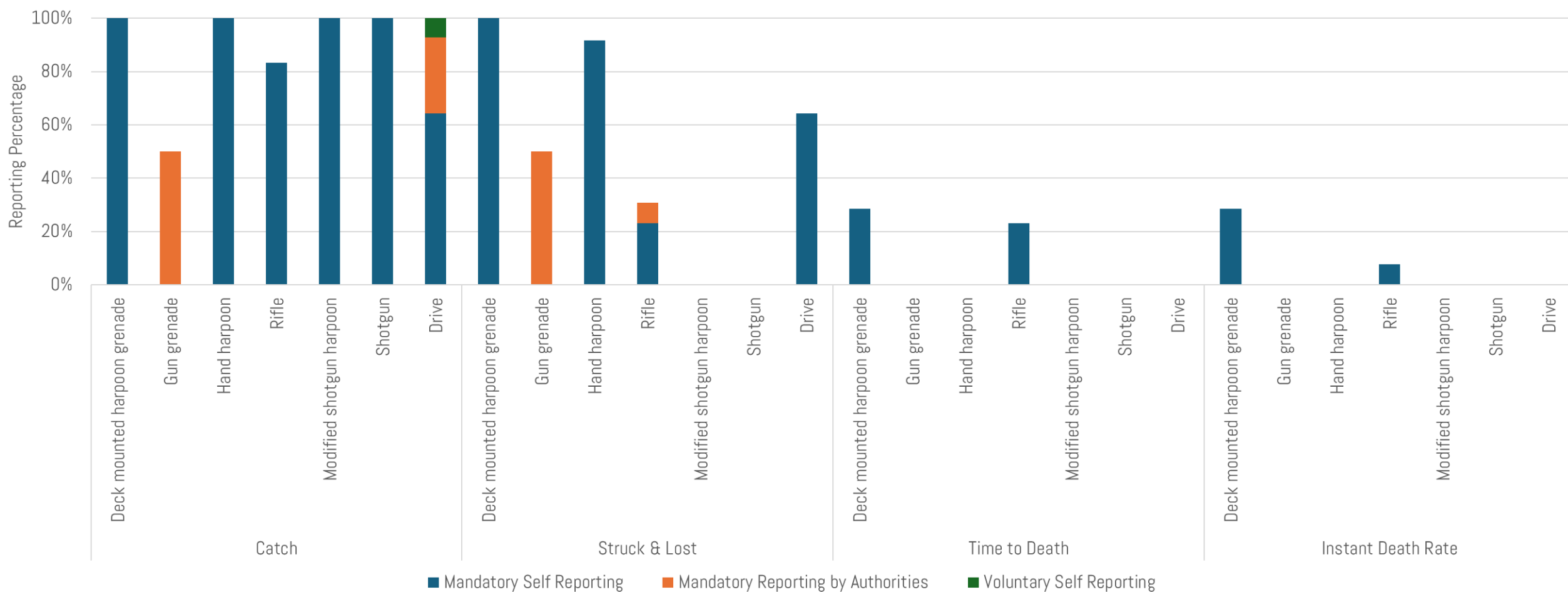
Minke whale	642
Bryde whale	187
Fin whale	108
Harbour porpoise	3,133
Long-finned pilot whale	847
Beluga	644
Harp seal	41,281
Ringed seal	32,353
Grey seal	1,375



# Information on hunts – top HM for catch 2019-2023

- Main hunting method (HM) per group:
  - Deck mounted harpoon gun 
  - Rifle  

# Information on hunts – requirement in reporting 2019-2023





# Information on hunts – welfare

## TTD & IDR

**Large whale hunts:** Most reported, reporting often required & most studied

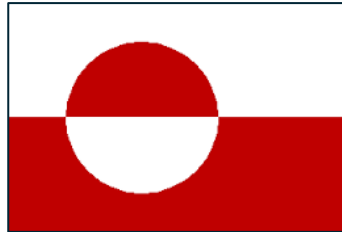
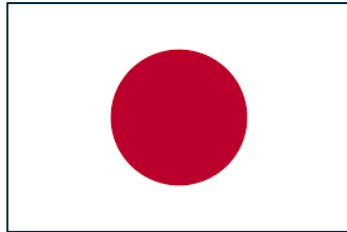
**Small whale hunts:**

- *Drive hunts:* No reporting required for individuals' TTD
- *Harpoon hunts:* No required reporting, and no studies carried out
- *Rifle hunts:* Reporting only required for narwhal and beluga in Greenland

**Seal hunts:** No required reporting, only reported for harp seals in Norway

# Work at the MMWWS

- During the workshop some communities presented their hunts



# The killing methods and TTD of cetaceans in the Japanese commercial whaling



Copyright by Japan Whaling Association

**The Government of Japan**

# Large whale in West Greenland

## Small cetacean hunting in West Greenland

## Walrus hunting in North West Greenland

Jens Danielsen, Mika Kruse and Anthon Egede





# Ethical problem of Swedish seal hunt, wounded seals and losses.

Sven Gunnar Lunneryd, Scientist, Swedish University of Agricultural Science  
Courses in seal hunting for Swedish Hunters Association.



Seal safe pontoon trap for salmon, developed by Program Seal and Fishery and Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

# A day in the life of a Barrouallie Whaler



# Nunavut, Canada

## Hunting methods

*By*

*Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.*

*Gabriel Nirlungayuk*

*Raymond Mercer*

*Johnny Mike*



# Presentation

## Drive hunts - Faroe Islands



Ragnar Jacobsen & Bjarni Mikkelsen



# General Discussion



Ichiro Nomura  
Fisheries Agency of Japan



# NAMMCO Marine Mammal Welfare Workshop

Introduction to the general discussion

Background/main ideas presented

By Kathrine A. Ryeng (DVM, Dr.med.vet.)  
Institute of Marine Research, Tromsø, Norway

NAMMCO Marine Mammal Welfare Workshop, Tromsø, March 24, 2025



Photo: NAMMCO / K. A. Ryeng, / Michael Poltermann / Leif Nøttestad (IMR)



# Marine Mammal Hunting

Takes place in many different regions of the world with a variety of weapons and methods depending on factors such as species and size of animal, hunting habitat and environmental conditions, cultural traditions, commercial availability of gear, legislation, economy, personal experiences and preferences, and animal welfare considerations

# Significant welfare improvements

In several NAMMCO hunts (and others), significant advances have been made in achieving the goals of increasing IDR and reducing TTD and struck-and-lost rates



# What can we learn from each other?

Today, we have learned about marine mammal hunting methods from different areas of the world

The upcoming discussion should be on sharing of knowledge

By open dialogue and exchange of information, we may learn from each other to get new insights and ideas on methodology in a manner that maximizes hunter safety, and reduces TTD and struck-and-lost rates, while achieving the intended goal

# A comparative analysis of animal welfare legislation in selected countries

NAMMCO



水産庁

Nikolas Selheim  
*Sellheim Environmental*

# Output of the discussions (1/3)

- **Develop a common framework** for terminology, data collection, and analysis, taking into account the specificities of each hunt.
- **Define best welfare outcomes by species and hunt type.** This includes finding realistic best practices for the lowest possible TTD, highest IDR, and minimum struck-and-lost. Improving global welfare outcomes does not require standardisation of regulations across countries and regions.
- **Promote the fast killing of the animal to reduce suffering and improve welfare outcomes,** which has been recognised as being in the hunters' best interest. It should be a principle that the best available equipment should be used for the hunt.



## Output of the discussions (2/3)

- **Make available the necessary hunting equipment** to improve welfare outcomes and have a more efficient hunt. For this purpose, we should aim at having stable access to the best available equipment.
- **Develop new methods and find the best available equipment for an efficient hunt.** This should be supported by accessible and adequate training, as well as with the appropriate practical support.



# Output of the discussions (3/3)

- **Share knowledge about hunting tools/equipment and know-how among hunting communities.** NAMMCO could organise a dedicated initiative to go further into exchanging knowledge. The specific hunts to be discussed in this setting could be prioritised in consultation between hunters and managers.