

Increased Attention to Welfare in Marine Mammal Hunting

Press Release

Marine mammals are hunted for food and other resources across various regions of the world, from west to east and north to south, in very different environmental and cultural contexts. A shared feature of these hunts is the attention to welfare outcomes. This focus is driven by two key factors: A quick and humane kill benefits the hunted animal, and it is also in the hunter's best interest, improving both safety and efficiency.

On March 24, 2025, hunters from 11 communities gathered in Tromsø to discuss the state of welfare outcomes in marine mammal hunting and explore ways to improve these practices. The participants, including hunters, veterinarians, scientists, and managers from Nunavut, Nunavik, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Åland, and Japan, shared their experiences and expertise in efforts to minimise hunting durations and reduce the loss of animals.

The workshop, organised by NAMMCO and co-hosted with the Fisheries Agencies of Japan, provided an inclusive forum for participants to exchange knowledge on successful practices, challenges, and areas for improvement. Significant progress has been made in reducing the time it takes to kill marine mammals and in decreasing "struck-and-lost" rates for some hunts. However, there is still room for improvement in certain hunting methods.

The participants emphasised the importance of learning from one another and highlighted the need for a common framework for terminology, data collection, and analysis to track welfare outcomes. They also highlighted that target goals for reducing the duration of the hunting process and minimising animal loss for specific species and hunt types, would be beneficial. Additionally, the use of the best available equipment was underscored, as was the need for stable access to this equipment. Accessible and adequate training for the hunters was a prerequisite to good welfare outcomes, as well as their involvement in the development of new hunting methods and monitoring program.

NAMMCO is an organisation uniquely placed to support the improvement of hunting methods in a practical way and will continue to support the wider sharing of knowledge among hunting communities to improve welfare outcomes in marine mammal hunting, including hunting tools and equipment.

About NAMMCO

NAMMCO is an international organisation for regional consultation and cooperation on the conservation, rational management, and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic, dealing with small and large whales as well as seals and walrus. The NAMMCO agreement was signed in Nuuk in April 1992.

NAMMCO provides conservation and management advice based on science, local knowledge, and technological developments. The work of the committees is assisted by international experts. The organisation follows best practices and a precautionary approach, striving to base its work on an ecosystem approach to management.

More information on NAMMCO and its activities can be found at www.nammco.org

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