

CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO COMMISSIONERS
AND CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS
IWC.CCG.388

Call for information on whale killing methods and associated welfare issues

In recent years, discussions on whale killing methods and associated welfare issues have focused on data and information requested through Resolutions 1997-1, 1999-1 and 2001-2 and in relation to the Action Plan on Whale Killing Methods (which was revised at IWC/55 last year). The purpose of this Circular is to invite Contracting Governments to submit information in accordance with these Resolutions and Action Plan as appropriate. Copies of the Resolutions and the most recent Action Plan are attached as Annex 1.

The Resolutions, *inter alia*, encourage the reporting of:

- information on whales killed, such as: number of whales killed by each method; number and proportion of whales killed instantaneously; time to death for each animal not killed instantly; variance data on times to death (to the extent possible); number of whales targeted and missed; number of whales struck and lost; calibre of rifle where used and how many bullets used; methods used to determine unconsciousness/time of death;
- steps being taken to improve the humaneness of whaling operations.

The above are targeted at member countries involved in taking whales. However, certain operative paragraphs apply to all Contracting Governments in that:

- all Contracting Governments are encouraged to provide appropriate technical assistance to reduce time to unconsciousness and death in all whaling operations;
- all Contracting Governments are encouraged to provide relevant data from the killing of other large mammals.

I would be grateful if data and information could be provided to the Secretariat by **7 June 2004** so that it can be circulated in advance of the Annual Meeting.

With respect to the provision of information on whales killed, the Secretariat has developed a Summary Reporting Form that you may wish to use (see Annex 2). Please note that completion of the form is not compulsory and it is not intended to replace the submission of detailed documents where appropriate.

As you are aware, the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues is not scheduled to meet at IWC/56 in Sorrento and the issue will be addressed directly by the Commission in plenary.

Dr. Nicky Grandy
Secretary to the Commission

Annex 1
Resolutions and Action Plan on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues

IWC Resolution 1997-1
Resolution on improving the humaneness of Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling

The International Whaling Commission:

RECOGNISING the need to hunt whales by aboriginal people with a continuing traditional dependence on whaling to meet their nutritional, subsistence and cultural needs;

AWARE of the need to ensure that aboriginal subsistence whaling causes the least possible pain and distress to hunted whales;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commission:

WELCOMES the steps taken so far by the aboriginal subsistence whalers of the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Greenland to improve the humaneness of whaling techniques in aboriginal subsistence hunts;

URGES them to do everything possible to reduce still further any unavoidable suffering caused to whales in such hunts;

REQUESTS the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Denmark to continue to inform the Commission on an annual basis of progress made in this matter, and to provide other information concerning the taking of whales under aboriginal subsistence quotas;

REQUESTS all Contracting Parties to provide appropriate technical assistance to improve the humaneness of aboriginal subsistence whaling;

AGREES to consider this issue at annual meetings of the Humane Killing Working Group;

REQUESTS the next Workshop on Whale Killing Methods to review the data received by the Commission on this matter.

IWC Resolution 1999-1

Resolution Arising From The Workshop On Whale Killing Methods

NOTING that the terms of reference for the 1999 IWC Workshop on Whale Killing Methods included the consideration of all methods of killing currently in use in whaling or known to be in development, and specified that a comparative analysis of the methods be undertaken with a view to improving whale killing techniques and minimising times to irreversible insensibility and death;

RECALLING IWC Resolution 1997-1 which urged aboriginal subsistence whalers to do everything possible to reduce still further any avoidable suffering caused to whales in such hunts;

RECOGNISING the efforts made by some countries to provide information on research and improvements in hunting methods;

WHEREAS the Workshop submitted its report, IWC/51/12, to the Commission for consideration;

Now THEREFORE the Commission

1. COMMENDS the Report of the Workshop and accepts the 11 point Action Plan (which appears as Appendix 1 of the Chairman's Report of the 51st Annual Meeting) as the basis for advice to members of the IWC.
2. ENCOURAGES where possible the submission to the annual meetings of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues, and future Workshops of relevant information such as:
 - number of whales killed by each method;
 - number and proportion of total whales killed instantaneously;
 - time to death for each animal not killed instantly;
 - number of whales targeted and missed;
 - number of whales struck and lost;
 - calibre of rifle where used and how many bullets used;
 - methods used to determine unconsciousness/time of death.
3. ENCOURAGES the development of more accurate indicators for determining time to death other than cessation of movement.
4. RECOGNISES the difficulty in some aboriginal subsistence hunts of obtaining time to death information; and notes that, where it can be assessed, the lack of information regarding time to death on aboriginal subsistence hunts prohibits an assessment of any improvement in these hunts.
5. ENCOURAGES all Contracting Governments to provide appropriate technical assistance to reduce time to unconsciousness and death in all aboriginal subsistence whaling.

Resolution 2001-2

Resolution on Whale Killing Methods

RECOGNISING that the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues (WGWKM&AWI) is established to review information and documentation available with a view to advise the Commission on whale killing methods and associated welfare issues;

NOTING that IWC/53/WKM&AWI9 as distributed by the Secretariat calls for a Summary of Activities related to the Action Plan on Whale Killing Methods (based on resolution 1999-1), and the UK Paper on Collection of Whale Killing Data (IWC/53/WKM&AWI5) submitted to WGWKM&AWI53;

RECALLING IWC resolution 1997-1 which urged aboriginal subsistence whalers to do everything possible to reduce still further any avoidable suffering caused to whales in such hunts;

NOTING the proposal that Contracting Governments should supply data on animal welfare issues to the IWC;

DISAPPOINTED at the lack of information presented to the WGWKM&AWI on the recent kills of sperm and Bryde's whales.

RECOGNISING that seasonal and weather variations can adversely impact times to death;

NOTING the inclusion of the recommendation for the development of better criteria for determining the onset of permanent insensibility in whales, using physiological and behavioural observations, correlated as far as possible with post mortem examinations, under the revised action plan on whale killing methods IWC51Ann rep. Appendix 1;

NOTING also that previous Workshops have considered relevant comparative data from killing of other large mammals.

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

AGREES to convene in 2003 a Workshop on Whale Killing Methods;

ENCOURAGES all Contracting Governments to report to the Commission any technical developments within whale killing technologies and to submit, to the extent possible, relevant information, including variance data on times to death, to the meetings of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues, and future Workshops on Whale Killing Methods;

ALSO ENCOURAGES all Contracting Governments to provide relevant comparative data from killing of other large mammals;

ENCOURAGES all Contracting Governments to provide appropriate technical assistance to reduce time to unconsciousness and death in all whaling operations.

REVISED ACTION PLAN ON WHALE KILLING METHODS

(Workshop on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues, 7-9 June 2003, Berlin, Germany)

A. Equipment and Methods

(1) Encourage continued co-operation **among Contracting Governments** to refine the design of penthrite grenades as far as possible.

(2) Continue improving accuracy of delivery of penthrite grenade harpoons, including assessment of refined sighting equipment suitable for rapid action under conditions encountered at sea. Support and encourage the development and implementation of programmes to provide training in the safe handling and effective use of killing devices including the penthrite grenade and in other aspects of the hunt.

(3) Continue to review constraints on shooting distance and relative orientation of vessel and whale and encourage reducing times to death.

(4) Continue to review effectiveness of secondary killing methods with a view to reducing times to death in whales and encourage the application of the most effective methods.

B. Indication of insensibility and death

(5) Develop better criteria for determining the onset of permanent insensibility in whales, using physiological and behavioural observations.

C. Assessment of cause of death in relation to observed time to death

(6) Where possible, examine the effects of trauma, and its consequences, caused by harpoons and other devices used to capture whales, and its relationship to the reactions of the captured whale.

Develop standardised guidelines for recording major indications of death.

D. Collection and provision of information on time of death

(7) Encourage collaboration between technical and scientific experts with a view to suggesting evidence based guidelines for the collection and dissemination of information in relation to both primary and secondary killing methods in forms that allow the effectiveness of different methods to be compared. The data should be presented to the maximum extent possible with statistical analysis that allows independent appraisal and analysis.

(8) Encourage collection and presentation of struck and lost rates and standardised **estimated** time to death records in all aboriginal subsistence catches of whales and undertake assessment of requirements for controls on the use of rifles to kill unsecured whales.

(9) Encourage the incorporation of data collection and reduction of struck and lost rates in initiatives in Greenland relating to the beluga and narwhal hunts.

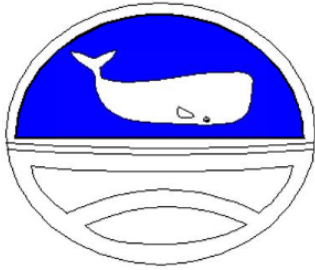
E. Assessment of physiological status of hunted animals

(10) Develop suggested guidelines for, and where possible implement collection of representative biological samples from whales in extremis with an aim to determining reliable indices of stress for animals killed in whaling operations.

F. Next steps

The Workshop participants encourage the IWC to hold a further **scientific and technical workshop in 3-5 years** and to call for **further improvements in data collection, analysis and reporting** in order to evaluate progress made in improving whale killing methods. In the meantime, information should **continue to** be provided to the appropriate technical Working Group.

Annex 2: Summary Reporting Form



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Summary of Activities Related to the Action Plan on Whale Killing Methods (based on Resolution 1999-1)

Please note that completion of this form is not compulsory but it will greatly aid the discussions at the forthcoming Working Group Meeting. The Secretariat would be grateful if you can complete this form as fully as possible, preferably electronically and return it to Secretariat@iwcoffice.org by 7 June.

Contracting Government	
Season	
Area	
Fishery type (e.g. commercial, aboriginal subsistence, scientific permit)	

Summary of primary and secondary whale killing methods used (Note that the appropriate Method No. should be used throughout the form):

Method No.	Brief description of method (e.g. penthrite grenade, 'cold' grenade, rifle of <i>stated calibre</i> , etc). Put the most commonly used method first. Insert more rows if necessary.	Used as: (state whether primary killing method, secondary, or both)
1		
2		
3		

Summary of criteria used to indicate unconsciousness and death:

[Include brief description here]

Summary of information providers:

Percentage of data provided by:	
▪ inspectors	
▪ scientists	
▪ hunters	
▪ other (please specify)	

Summary of hunt:

Item	Species 1 <i>[insert name]</i>		Species 2 <i>[insert name]</i>		Species 3 <i>[insert name]</i>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Whale killing methods						
▪ Total no. killed (all methods summed)						
▪ Total killed using Method 1 only						
▪ Total killed using Method 2 only						
▪ Total killed using Method 3 only						
▪ Total needing secondary harpoon or other secondary killing method						
▪ If bullets used						
○ minimum number						
○ maximum number						
○ median number						
Time to unconsciousness/death (TTD)*						
▪ Total for which information recorded						
▪ Total estimated TTD to be instant						
▪ Maximum estimated TTD						
▪ Mean time to TTD						
▪ Median Time to TTD						
Other information						
▪ Total targeted and missed						
▪ Total struck and lost						

***NB The Resolution asks for TTD information for each whale not killed instantly. Please append these data, e.g. as Table or histogram.**

Other: Any other relevant information e.g. with information on technical assistance given to other fisheries or with respect to new studies to (a) improve methods and TTD, (b) develop new criteria for TTD:

