

Annual Report of the International Whaling Commission 2004
56th Annual Meeting, 2004

Resolution 2004-3

RESOLUTION ON WHALE KILLING ISSUES

RECOGNISING THAT welfare considerations for cetaceans killed for food is of international concern;

NOTING THAT Article V.1.f of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling empowers the Commission to amend the Schedule “to adopt regulations with respect to the conservation and utilisation of whale resources by fixing ... types and specifications of gear and apparatus and appliances which may be used”, and that the Commission has exercised this welfare mandate through modification of the schedule and adopting 15 resolutions on welfare aspects of whaling which have established several technical fora for addressing welfare issues;

RECALLING THAT the IWC has defined “Humane Killing” as “Death brought about without pain, stress, or distress perceptible to the animal. That is the ideal. Any humane killing technique aims first to render an animal insensitive to pain as swiftly as technically possible. In practice this cannot be instantaneous in the scientific sense” (IWC/33/15 & IWC/51/12) and that, in order to determine whether these criteria are met, various data must be collected from whaling operations;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the IWC criteria used to determine death or irreversible insensibility are inadequate; while also recognising that the IWC Working Group and Workshops on Whale Killing Methods are attempting to develop criteria to more adequately determine death or irreversible insensitivity both operationally and from post-mortem approaches;

NOTING THAT the efficiency of killing methods is influenced by many factors including the calibre of the weapon used, the nature of the ammunition, the target area of the whale, the angle of the shot, the proximity of the whale to the vessel, the accuracy of the gunner, prevailing weather conditions and sea state, including sea ice, and the size and species of the whale targeted;

NOTING FURTHER THAT data collection requirements are not being met in some hunts, while appreciating that efforts have been made by some member nations to provide available data;

RECALLING that Contracting Parties should make reasonable attempts to release alive, with the minimum harm possible, whales that have been incidentally captured (IWC Resolution 2001-4), but that the Commission has not considered the welfare implications of this practice nor the killing methods that might be employed if the whale cannot be released;

NOTING WITH CONCERN THAT the number of whales struck in some hunts can have significant welfare implications, while appreciating the efforts of certain member nations, especially Norway, to improve the humaneness of their hunts through weapons improvement programs and increased hunt efficiency;

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

EXPRESSES CONCERN, in light of its mandate and long-standing commitment to address welfare issues, that current whaling methods do not guarantee death without pain, stress or distress; that data presently collected and submitted to the Commission are of insufficient quality or completeness for it to make a fully informed assessment of the welfare implications of all whaling operations; and that the criteria currently used to determine the onset of death or irreversible insensibility are inadequate;

REQUESTS THE SECRETARIAT TO update the data collection form for the reporting of data in order that contracting governments may report data for each whale taken, the killing method used and samples taken;

REQUESTS the IWC57 annual meeting to reconvene the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare issues, to examine methods for reducing struck and lost rates in whaling operations and to consider the welfare implications of methods used to kill whales caught in nets;

REQUESTS the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues to advise the Commission on:

- establishing better criteria for determining the onset of irreversible insensibility and death;
- methods of improving the efficiency of whale killing methods and
- reducing times to death and other associated welfare issues.