



**The European Commission is considering a seal-product trade ban that would save millions of seals from a horrible fate. You can help convince the EU to end cruel seal product trade now! The deadline for comments is 13 February 2008.**

## **Get the Facts Before You Comment**

### **You Can Make a Difference**

A European Union ban on the trade in seal products will save millions of seals from being slaughtered for their fur. Please speak up for the seals in this official survey.

### **One Answer Is All It Takes**

It will take you a few minutes to answer the complete survey, but not all questions are mandatory. **If you only have time to answer one question** (aside from your personal details, which you must fill in to participate), please make sure that you answer the final one: "What would you suggest to decision-makers at the European level on possible legislative measures to regulate the placing on the market of seal products?" Please choose the last option: "the placing on the market of seal products, wherever they come from, should be banned."

### **We Can Help You**

We have provided additional information on some of the questions to help guide you through the process. However, this should be seen as advice only: It is important that you give your own opinion and that you express your views in the way you feel most appropriate. **Please keep this page open as you fill out the survey or print it out so that you can refer to it as you answer questions.**

## Information on Selected Questions

### **Is hunting seal populations (without reducing the overall seal stocks) different to other ways of making use of natural resources, such as hunting deer or catching fish? (optional)**

*Humane Society International believes the answer to this question should be "yes" for the following reasons:*

1. Whenever wild animals are hunted, it is tremendously difficult to kill in a manner that conforms to internationally recognized standards of humane slaughter. However, that challenge is even greater when hunting marine mammals such as seals because wounded marine mammals can escape underneath the water's surface and remain underwater for extended periods of time. Each year in commercial seal hunts around the world, huge numbers of wounded seals escape beneath the surface of the water and often die slowly. Their bodies are never recovered. These seals are called "struck and lost." In Canada's hunt alone, According to the Canadian government, tens of thousands of seals succumb to this terrible fate each year. Estimates put the struck and lost rate for Greenland as high as 50 percent.
2. Unlike many hunts for wild animals, seals are usually killed when just a few days or weeks of age (in the case of Canada, Namibia, Norway and Russia). The seal pups have no way to escape or defend themselves against the hunters. In Namibia and Russia, nursing pups can be hunted, which has clear animal welfare implications.

### **If yes: What is the main reason why you think that seal hunting is different to other ways of making use of natural resources? (optional)**

*Humane Society International recommends respondents choose the third option.*

Although we do believe that seals are particularly vulnerable on land and on ice, we think the third option ("Hunting seals to use for fur and other non-essential products is not justified") is the most appropriate response here.

### **How much should concern over animal welfare count compared to concern over local communities that depend on seal hunting? (optional)**

*Humane Society International believes animal welfare is equally as important as the interests of local communities.*

However, we find this question somewhat misleading, in that we are unaware of any communities for which seal hunting is the primary source of income. Moreover, the phrasing of the possible responses could indicate that ending the seal hunt and promoting the interests of local communities are mutually exclusive.

In our opinion, ending seal hunting is in the best interests of the communities involved for several reasons.

- The often harsh environments in which hunts occur (in remote areas under extreme weather conditions) make seal hunts dangerous, resulting in injuries and deaths.
- Many believe seal hunting is dehumanizing work for the people involved.
- The income derived from commercial seal hunts depends on the whims of the fashion industry, and prices for seal products vary wildly from year to year.
- The seal hunting industry relies heavily on government subsidies—for example, in 2000, 80 percent of the money earned by Norwegian sealers came from government subsidies.

- Even with significant economic support, seal hunts bring very little money to the people involved, generally accounting for a small fraction of their annual incomes.
- Commercial seal hunts have sparked international boycotts of tourism, seafood and other products, often costing the economies of the countries concerned many times the amount of money generated by seal hunting.

We believe government sponsored sealing industry retirement plans provide the best solution for the seals and for the people who hunt them. Such plans involve governments paying licensed seal hunters to "retire" their hunting licenses, compensating them for several years of lost revenue and providing retraining programs where appropriate. Sealers are thus provided with money to invest in more sustainable, safer job opportunities, and governments are given a graceful way to end controversies that have haunted them for decades.

**Which are, to your knowledge, the main methods for killing seals? (Select two options maximum) (optional)**

*We recommend respondents choose the first two options (shooting, physical).*

While all four of the methods listed are used to kill seals, the first two options are the most widespread killing methods in commercial seal hunts.

## **Methods of seal killing**

**Please rank, by order of priority from the most appropriate (1) to the least appropriate (4), the seal killing methods which, in your view, are the most appropriate killing methods to use for reducing, as much as possible, unnecessary pain, distress and suffering, provided that these methods are correctly used.**

*We recommend selecting NONE of the four options, as in our view none of the methods can be termed 'appropriate.' An alternative is to pick the method you consider to be most inhumane and rank it as '4', leaving the other options blank.*

*Shooting:* Seals are moving targets. They are usually shot from moving vessels in extreme weather conditions and at great distances, making consistent accuracy impossible. Even at close range, shooting may not instantly render a seal insensible to pain. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association Guidelines on Euthanasia (2007), a gunshot to the head may be considered a humane method of slaughter, but Canada's Royal Commission on Seals and Sealing states: "Many Canadian [seal] hunts take place, or have taken place, under conditions which make it impossible to obtain an acceptably high proportion of kills with head shot."

*Clubbing:* Seals are often only wounded by the first blow and are left to suffer in agony for extended periods of time. The Canadian Royal Commission on Seals and Sealing has found that accuracy in clubbing is not always possible, noting that "the difficulties arise from the actual conditions under which the seal hunt is conducted."

*Netting:* In this technique, seals are captured in nets and drowned. The AVMA has determined drowning to be an "inhumane" Method of killing.

*Harpooning:* Seals are stabbed with spears and then pulled in. Because they are injured but not necessarily stunned, seals experience pain and suffering while dragged through the

water or on the ice. There is an unacceptable delay before the seals are retrieved and rendered unconscious.

**Is the age of hunted seals a factor in your view? (optional)**

*Humane Society International recommends respondents NOT choose the first two options.*

We believe the first two options support commercial hunting of seals. We oppose all commercial hunting of wild animals but do not oppose subsistence hunting by aboriginal people.

**The use of hunted seals—which is the most acceptable to you? (optional)**

*Humane Society International recommends that respondents choose NONE of the first five options.*

We believe the first five options could be perceived as supporting commercial hunting of seals. We oppose all commercial hunting of wild animals but do not oppose subsistence hunting by aboriginal people.

**The hunter—what is the most acceptable to you? Tick the statement which comes closest to your opinion. (optional)**

*Humane Society International recommends that respondents NOT choose the first three options.*

We believe the first two options could be perceived as supportive of commercial seal hunting, while the third would directly endorse a practice to which HSI is opposed. We oppose all commercial hunting of wild animals and the hunting of animals for sport.

## **Regulating seal hunting**

**Seal hunting is acceptable if it is regulated by clear laws setting requirements for seal hunting methods. (optional)**

**AND**

**Seal hunting is acceptable if it is regulated by law, setting requirements to seal hunting methods and if independent inspectors control the seal hunts. (optional)**

*Humane Society International recommends that people indicate "fully disagree" for both of these options.*

Commercial seal hunts occur in remote regions, in inaccessible places, and over vast areas. It would be a practical impossibility for enforcement agents to effectively monitor seal hunting and thus ensure regulations are followed. Thus, regulations have no practical power. For example in Canada, the seal hunt occurs over an area of ocean larger than France. Thousands of individuals operating from thousands of vessels hunt the seals, and the bulk of the killing occurs in just a few days. In 1986, the Canadian Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry reported on the inability of authorities to effectively monitor the commercial seal hunt in Canada, stating, "The area that they must patrol is very extensive, the number of sealers is large, and sealing operations are multifaceted. For these reasons it

is impossible to keep all parts of the seal hunt under close supervision at all times." We believe these observations apply to all commercial seal hunts globally.

**It is generally known that in some cases, not all seals that are thought to have been killed actually die. Some will only have been wounded and will manage to get away (called struck and lost). For seal hunting to be acceptable, which struck-and-lost ratio is acceptable? (optional)**

*Humane Society International believes the first five options would allow for unacceptable levels of suffering and therefore suggest that respondents NOT choose the first five options.*

As stated in the question, seals that are struck and lost are wounded then escape beneath the surface of the water. These seals often die slowly and painfully. There is no recognized body in the world that would suggest such a practice is humane. Given the number of seals that are hunted around the world, even a struck and lost rate as low as 5% would mean tens of thousands of seals.

**What would you suggest to decision-makers at the European level on possible legislative measures to regulate the placing on the market of seal products? Please select one statement only. (optional)**

*We recommend people select the last option in this question, "the placing on the market of seal products, wherever they come from, should be banned."*

The only way to end commercial seal hunting around the world is to ban the seal product trade.