

Press Release

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Norway's Whaling Future Uncertain after Survey Shows Little Domestic Appetite for Whale Meat

The future of Norway's whaling industry appears to be in serious doubt as it struggles to deal with low catch numbers, falling prices for whale meat and declining interest in its products on the domestic market. The head of Norway's Whalers' Association, Truls Soløy, described the 2019 whaling season as "particularly disappointing" after a total of 429 minke whales were killed, even fewer than last year (454) and well below the country's self-allocated quota of 1,278. The declining catch reflects the dwindling domestic demand for whale meat, despite continuing subsidies ploughed into the industry by the Norwegian government.

A [recent survey](#) commissioned by a coalition of whale conservation and animal welfare organisations and conducted this summer by the Norwegian polling company, Opinion AS, paints a bleak future for whalers in Norway. Its findings revealed:

- Overall, only 4 percent of Norwegians polled indicated they ate whale meat "often," while two-thirds either didn't eat it at all or did so "a long time ago."
- In the 18-29 age group no one said they ate whale meat often, while 75 percent said they never ate it or only did so a long time ago.
- Only 9 percent of the 70-and-older group said they consumed whale meat often.

Norwegian whaling quotas are issued in defiance of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) ban on commercial whaling. Since the 1986 moratorium, Norwegian whalers have killed more than 14,440 minke whales.

"It is clear that Norway sanctions the hunts to satisfy its political agenda rather than consumer demand" said Vanessa Williams-Grey, policy manager at WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation. "We already know that the hunts are cruel and unnecessary, but they are even less acceptable in light of the findings of a [brand-new report by the IMF](#) which confirms the crucial role whales play in the battle against climate change."

"As concern for animal welfare grows in Norway, there is little support for the killing of whales in a way that causes severe suffering. Also, more Norwegians are concerned about the protection of wildlife in general, and dissatisfied with the level of protection for wild animals in Norway" said Siri Martinsen, director of Norwegian animal rights organisation, NOAH.

For decades, the Norwegian government has subsidized the whaling industry to promote whale meat consumption. In an effort to boost flagging sales, last year the government gave half a million kroner (equivalent to \$55,700 / £46,000) to support the marketing of minke whale meat. The whaling industry has also supplemented its income in previous years by selling its product to fur farms for use as animal feed. However, new legislation banning fur farming in Norway will shut down that income stream in the near future.

“The government has spent millions over the years in an effort to prop up the dying whaling industry, supporting marketing schemes that have failed to entice Norwegian consumers,” said Claire Bass, of executive director of Humane Society International UK. “These poll results clearly show that most Norwegians don’t want to eat whales, so it’s time for Norway to close the chapter on whaling. By announcing a ban on fur farming in June, the Norwegian government has shown itself moving with the times on animal welfare, we urge it to apply that same scrutiny to the indisputably cruel practice of firing exploding grenades at fully conscious whales.”

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For more information:

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Note to Editors

1. Norway, along with Japan and Iceland, are the only nations that engage in commercial whaling. Iceland has not taken any whales this summer, and the hope is that this situation will continue.
2. Norway’s whaling has serious repercussions for animal welfare. A report submitted last year to the IWC by Norwegian authorities confirmed the immense cruelty of the minke whale hunts, with many whales dying in agony. The report revealed that nearly 20 percent of whales shot by grenade-tipped harpoons suffer for 6 to 25 minutes before eventually succumbing to their wounds.

Coalition members

Animal Welfare Institute: *The [Animal Welfare Institute](http://www.awionline.org) (www.awionline.org) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere – in the laboratory, on the*

farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates and other important animal protection news.

Cetacean Society International (CSI) is an all-volunteer, non-profit conservation, education and research organization working on behalf of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and their marine environment. Its mission is to stop the killing, capture and display of cetaceans and to encourage human activities that enhance public awareness and stewardship of cetaceans and our marine environment. www.csiwhalesalive.org.

Humane Society International constitutes one of the world's largest animal protection organisations. For more than 20 years, HSI has been working for the protection of all animals through the use of science, advocacy, education and hands on programs.

NOAH - for animal rights (www.dyrsrettigheter.no) is the biggest animal welfare organization in Norway, founded in 1989 and working for the respect and welfare of all animals in Norway. Recent victories include the banning of fur farming and use of exotic animals in circuses, as well as establishment of animal police. NOAH currently focuses on the plight of farm animals, increasing the protection of wild animals as well as increasing the legal status of all animals.

OceanCare has been working for marine wildlife and ocean protection since 1989. In 2011 the organisation has been granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. OceanCare has been an observer at the IWC since 1992. The organisation published studies on the health risks associated with cetacean meat consumption, stirred debate on Japanese vote buying, which led to a ban on so-called incentive gifts ("fisheries aid"), and worked to improve civil society participation within the IWC by defining clear rights and duties of NGOs. The organisation is represented in the IWC Scientific Committee since 2015. www.oceancare.org

Pro Wildlife is committed to protect wildlife. This includes advocacy, strengthening national and international regulations, ensuring their implementation and funding vital conservation projects. Pro Wildlife has been an observer at the IWC since 1999 and is author of a series of reports and analysis regarding whaling and related issues. For more information, visit www.prowildlife.de

WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, is the leading global charity dedicated to the conservation and protection of whales and dolphins. We defend these remarkable creatures against the many threats they face through campaigns, lobbying, advising governments, conservation projects, field research and rescue. whales.org