

Big whales, underpowered harpoons: the welfare impacts of Japan's 'Scientific Whaling'

The Whalewatch coalition is concerned that weapons used to kill whales during 'Scientific Whaling' are **insufficient to guarantee a humane death.**

Japan reports that the 'instantaneous death rate' for minke whales (the smallest whale shown here) killed in the Southern Ocean during the JARPA hunt is only 40%. This means that at least some 60% of these smaller whales suffer a lingering death. Reported figures show that the **average** time to death in these hunts is two to three minutes. No maximum times to death have ever been provided for this hunt.

Of additional concern is the use of what are clearly underpowered weapons to kill larger whales (sei, Bryde's and sperm whales), as pictured here. The grenade harpoon designed for the smaller minke whale is likely to be even less effective on larger species. This may lead to even longer times to death and an increased number of whales being struck and then lost, a severe welfare issue.

Japan currently kills sei and Bryde's whales in the North Pacific using the same perthrite grenade harpoon designed for killing the smaller minke whale.

Japan also kills sperm whales in the North Pacific with the same grenade harpoon but with a slight increase in the perthrite charge – however, Japan has **FAILED TO PROVIDE ANY DATA TO THE IWC ON THE TIME TAKEN TO KILL SPERM WHALES IN THESE HUNTS.**

It is reported that Japan intends to kill humpback and fin whales (the largest whale pictured here and the second largest whale species on the planet) in the Southern Ocean. It is not known if the weapons will be adapted for the killing of these much larger whales, nor if any data on the killing of these whales will be provided.

Whalewatch believes that scientific whaling activities give rise to serious animal welfare concerns, particularly due to the unsuitability of the weapons used. On grounds of animal welfare alone, Whalewatch calls on the international Whaling Commission to halt all scientific whaling operations.

Illustrations by Uko Gorter



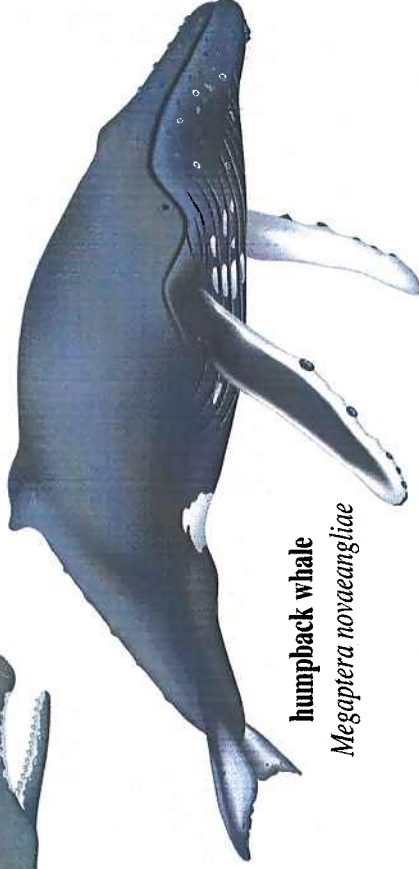
fin whale
Balaenoptera physalus



minke whale
Balaenoptera acutorostrata



sperm whale
Physeter macrocephalus



humpback whale
Megaptera novaeangliae



Bryde's whale
Balaenoptera edeni



sei whale
Balaenoptera borealis

