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IFAW

in action

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

KEY FACTS



The majority of Canadians are opposed to the killing of seal pups, which accounted for over 98% of the landed catch in 2006.

- 1 Canada's seal hunt is the **largest slaughter of marine mammals in the world.**
- 2 **Commercial sealing accounts for less than one-half of one per cent** of the Newfoundland and Labrador Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- 3 **The majority of Canadians are opposed to the killing of seal pups**, which accounted for over 98% of the landed catch in 2006.
- 4 In the last four out of five years, **the actual number of seals killed exceeded the government's quota.**

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please voice your opposition to the seal hunt by contacting:

The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada
Prime Minister's Office
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Canada
Fax: 1 (613) 941 6900
pm@pm.gc.ca



Photos: © D. White, IFAW; S. Cook

Fighting the World's Largest Hunt for Marine Mammals



Photo: © IFAW/S. Cook

Sheryl Fink, IFAW, observing a whitecoat harp seal on the ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, March 2006.

Photos: © IFAW



STOPPING THE HUNT

There are many good reasons why we should stop Canada's commercial seal hunt – here are just three:

1 The seal hunt is cruel.
The commercial seal hunt takes place over a large area in a very short amount of time. As a result, seals must be rapidly killed in order for sealers to make a profit. Speed, not humaneness, is the rule, as hunters rush to kill as many seals as possible in the short time available to them. IFAW hunt observers have witnessed acts of cruelty ranging from dragging live seals across the ice with sharpened steel hooks, to wounding but not sufficiently killing seals and even the skinning of live seals. In spite of these continuing examples of cruelty, these actions regularly go unpunished.

2 The seal hunt is not sustainable.
In the last decade, the Canadian government has been setting harp seal catch quotas well above what scientists deem to be the species' sustainable yield. In addition, sealers have been exceeding this established quota by as much as 20,000 animals in one year. Scientists warn that the current level of killing cannot be maintained without placing the harp seal population at unnecessary and significant risk of depletion.

3 The seal hunt is not economically viable.
From 1995-2000, the Canadian government provided \$20 million of direct subsidies to the sealing industry, including direct payment to sealers. Although these direct subsidies no longer exist, without significant government support the seal hunt could not exist as a self-sustaining industry. In fact, the seal hunt is such a poor investment it contributes less than one-half of one per cent of the Newfoundland and Labrador Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



Photo: © IFAW/S. Cook

Many people believe that Canada's commercial seal hunt was ended long ago when the European Commission voted to ban the import of whitecoat seal skins. Most are surprised to learn that not only does this cruel hunt still exist, but that the Canadian government has been propping up the industry for years with tax breaks and promotion of the seal hunt abroad.

Today, Canada's commercial seal hunt has expanded to levels not seen in the last 50 years due in large part to this governmental support.

In 2004, sealers killed more than 365,000 seals – the largest slaughter of seal pups in Canada since 1967.

As a direct result of these large kill levels, the harp seal population off the east coast of Canada has begun to decline.

It is still legal in Europe to trade in the skins of seals as young as 2 weeks of age. As soon as the infant harp seals begin to molt their white coats, they can be legally killed and their skins traded. In fact, 98% of the harp seals killed in last year's hunt were under three months old – many had not even eaten their first solid meal or had their first swim.

RALLYING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SEALS

IFAW is outraged by the Canadian government's attempt to expand this internationally offensive hunt for marine mammals – and we are committed to ending the commercial seal hunt once and for all.

Our efforts include worldwide education campaigns to alert politicians and the public to the many problems with the hunt, documenting alleged violations of the Marine Mammal Regulations and supporting crucial scientific research on harp seal population issues. These efforts have raised the profile of the campaign to a point where it is discussed at the highest levels of the Canadian government and internationally. Our global outreach has helped to implement national bans on seal products throughout the world. We are lobbying for legislation in the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, France and the UK and trade bans have been successfully passed in both Mexico and Belgium. We will keep working to educate the public and world leaders about the inherent cruelty and unsustainability of Canada's commercial seal hunt.

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