

Canada's Commercial Seal Hunt

An overview

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Overview

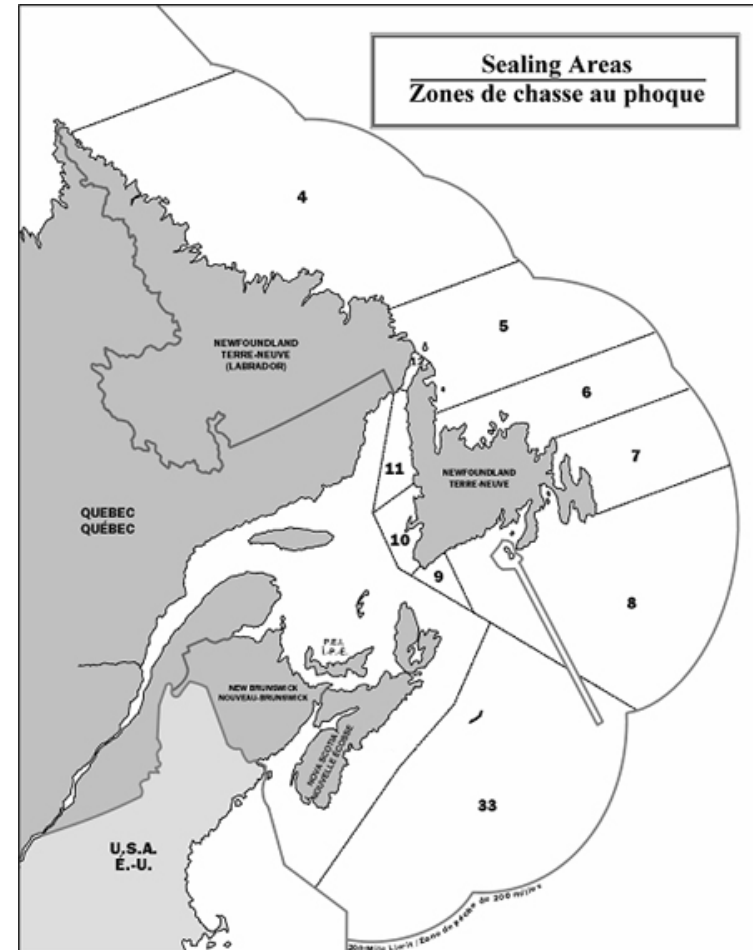
- Importance of seal hunt
- Description of sealing activity
 - Season, Location
 - Participants: Licence holders, Fleets, Processors
 - Sealing Methods
- Third Party Observers
- Role of Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Summarize Key Qualities of Canadian Seal Hunt
- Challenges and Opportunities

Importance of seal hunt

- Socio-cultural importance
 - A way of life and a source of pride and cultural identity
 - Highly skilled activity with long tradition
- Economic importance
 - several Atlantic communities earn up to 35% of income from sealing
 - \$70 – \$100 / pelt = \$30 CDN Million (2006)
 - \$33 / pelt = \$7 CDN Million (2008)

Season, Location

- Commercial harp seal hunt in March - April
- Front and Gulf, but specific location is variable
- Sealers from Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, and Maritime provinces
- Grey Seal hunting on Scotian Shelf and in Southern Gulf



Participants - Licence holders, Fleets, Processors

- Personal Use Licences
 - Six seals per season, non-commercial
- Temporary Licences
 - Crew only, not permitted to hunt
- 14,000 Commercial Licences
 - 5000 to 7000 active licences
 - Professional licences
 - Apprentice licences (supervised 2 years)
 - longliners (200-300), small boat operators (>1000), landsmen

Long liners

- Over 45'
- Longer trips
- Specialized crew (1-2 shooters, collectors)
- Often have small vessels as collectors
- Take 100s of seals / day



Small Boat fleet

- Under 45', fibreglass or wood
- Shorter trips
- Few dozen seals per day
- Integral part of the hunt e.g., when the long liner fleets close, crews join the small boat fleet

Sealing Method

- Three step approach for stunning, checking and bleeding put in place in 2008
- Stunning via Rifle, Shotgun slug, Hakapik or Club
 - Specifications in the Marine Mammal Regulations (high powered rifle / ammunition, hakapik dimensions / weight, strike location, etc.)
- Checking via corneal reflex test
- Series of regulatory changes proposed for 2009
 - Implement veterinary recommendations and address concerns in European Reports

Third Party Observers

- Constitutional right to observe the hunt
- Observer licences granted each year
 - Minister ensures orderly management and protection of seals from disturbance
- 2008 was the most active year on record
- Unlicensed Observation
 - Sea Shepard Society and Farley Mowat

Role of Department of Fisheries and Oceans

- DFO provides advise, regulation, and safety at sea
 - Science, Policy, International, Fisheries Management, Oceans and Habitat Management, Legislative, Coast Guard
- Fisheries Management
 - Objective based fisheries management
 - Consultations
 - Expert working groups
 - Regional management planning sessions
 - Atlantic-wide Advisory Meetings
 - Seal Forum
 - Management measures
 - Total Allowable Catch, closed areas, opening / close dates, licence conditions
 - Enforcement

Enforcement

- At-sea inspections from large vessels, small boats and zodiacs;
- Aircraft overflights and on-ice inspections using helicopters;
- Dockside, plant and vessel inspections;
- Certified Fisheries Observers on sealing vessels;
- Daily vessel hails;
- Buyer/processor receipts;
- Vessel Monitoring System (satellite) for NL longliners.



Key Qualities of the Canadian Hunt

- Large-scale hunt
 - 100s of thousands of animals harvested annually
- Widely dispersed with 100s of vessels over huge geographical area
- Highly regulated and monitored
 - DFO Managers, Fishery Officers, Contracted Observers
- Highly scrutinized
 - NGOs, Journalists, Parliamentarians
- Comprehensively studied by marine scientists, veterinarians, Royal Commission, European Studies

Challenges and Opportunities

- Ensuring continued healthy status
- Implementing new management measures for humane killing
- Effective compliance strategy
- Obtaining derogation, or finding non-EU markets