

A review of animal welfare implications of the Canadian commercial seal hunt: A critique

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Highlights

- An article in Marine Policy (2013;38:457–469) claimed that the Canadian seal hunt is inhumane.
- The authors were highly selective in their treatment of the information available.
- The video sequences used did not meet fundamental criteria of scientific rigor.
- This article failed to achieve its purpose of promoting animal welfare.

Abstract

In a recent article in this journal (Butterworth and Richardson. A review of animal welfare implications of the Canadian commercial seal hunt. Marine Policy 2013;38:457–469), the authors argued that “generally accepted principles of humane slaughter cannot be carried out effectively or consistently during the Canadian commercial seal hunt”. The present review purports to show that these authors' conclusions were incorrect because they were highly selective in their treatment of the information available and made no attempt to consider other perspectives. In addition, their reliance on anecdotal video sequences to support some of their points was seriously flawed since a vast proportion of these sequences failed to meet fundamental criteria of scientific rigor. The article by Butterworth and Richardson [5] failed to provide an unbiased presentation of the available data and therefore did not bring further clarity to the debate on the Canadian commercial seal hunt.

Keywords

Seal hunt; Animal welfare; Marine mammal regulations; Harp seal; *Pagophilus groenlandicus*