

Statement on Hunting and wildlife management

Submitted December 2007/January 2008

Summary

The Council for Animal Ethics has evaluated aspects of wildlife management and hunting from an animal welfare perspective. First, various reasons for hunting is described. The Council has not taken a stand on hunting *per se*, but on principal grounds a minority (of the council members) disapprove of hunting and fishing for leisure. Various forms of hunting (weapons, methods for hunting, trapping and fishing) and some approaches to public administration of hunting (seasonal limitations and controlled and limited harvesting) are discussed with respect to animal welfare. Commercial hunting (whale- and seal hunting) are not considered.

The Council believes that that one should have proper reason for killing an animal, irrespective of its species. Killing an animal for amusement only is not ethically acceptable. If the purpose is to use the game for meat or to limit the size of an animal population it is, nevertheless, essential that with respect to animal welfare hunting, trapping or fishing is performed in an ethical way. In situations where several alternatives exist, the most humane method should be chosen.

The Council believes that a theoretical proficiency test should be compulsory for all hunters, including those hunters who were exempted from the test because they were registered prior to its implementation. The compulsory course should convey good attitudes to hunting, and regard for animals, and it should contribute to increasing the hunters' awareness of their responsibilities. The Council further believes that demands to the practical skills in the proficiency test should be increased, and that the number of attempts to pass the practical test should be limited. Recent research has indicated that the efficacy of ammunition is variable. The Council advises that more detailed documentation, than currently requested, should be demanded for ammunition that is sold in Norway.

The Council is concerned for the risk of wounding, especially during bird hunting. Because the help of a dog may be necessary to find a wounded bird, the Council is critical to the banning of dogs from some hunting terrains. The Council requests that the Authorities consider making the presence of a search dog/retrieving dog compulsory for all hunting.

Burrow hunting with a dog entails a relatively long period of stress for the fox/badger, and there is danger of injury to both the dog and the game. The Council consider the hunting form where the fox/badger is shot while eating bait is a more humane form of hunting. The Council holds the opinion that burrow hunting is unnecessary and that it should be prohibited. Burrow tests for hunting dogs should not be performed.

The Council calls for a tightening of the regulations concerning hunting traps. In order to be approved a killing trap should render the animal unconscious within seconds, and the animal should remain unconscious until it dies from its injuries. Of importance is also reporting and inspection of traps.

Public administration of game should be founded on considerations for the ecosystem. By this is meant that the protection of biological diversity, not economic profit, should be the primary driving force in decision making. Animal species that are popular for hunting should not be

favoured at the expense of other species. The Council holds the opinion that hunting during the breeding season is ethically unacceptable, and should only be permitted in certain situations.

Some forms of hunting disturb the game more than others, and not only the species being hunted. The Council believes that hunting forms that disturb the game as little as possible and hold a low risk of wounding should be favoured. The consequences of controlled harvesting of game (specified number, age-group and sex of animals that can be killed during a season in a specified area) and the length of the hunting season should be investigated and evaluated, taking into account the effects on animal welfare. The Council believes that the animals' emotions should also be taken into consideration, for instance in situations where the infant is shot in front of its mother or the other way around.