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Mr François Hugo
Seal Alert

By mail: sasealion@wam.co.za

Subject: Namibian Pup Seal Cull - EFSA to consider review

Dear Mr Hugo,

Thank you for your e-mail of 9th September to Commissioner Dimas, in charge of environmental policies. I have been asked to reply on his behalf as well as on behalf of Commissioner Kyprianou. Your e-mail as well as the documentation provided on the Namibian seal hunt has received my full attention.

As you know, the European Commission, recognising the high level of public concern regarding the application of humane killing methods and in line with its commitment to high animal welfare standards, undertook, in its reply of 16 January 2007 to the written declaration of the European Parliament, to make a full objective assessment of the animal welfare aspects of seal hunting in the shortest possible time. Part of the assessment is conducted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and I believe that you have been invited to attend a stakeholder consultation meeting which EFSA organised on 4th October in Parma, Italy. I hope that your organisation had the possibility to actively contribute and participate in that important debate.

With regard to the scope of the mandate given to EFSA, please note that the Commission has asked EFSA to issue a scientific opinion on:

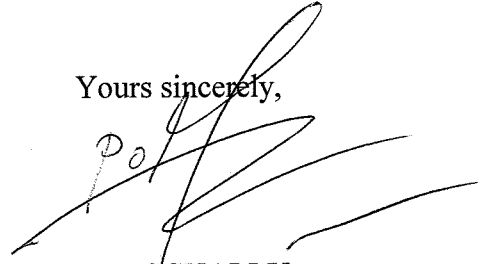
- the animal welfare aspects of the methods currently being used, particularly non-traditional methods, for killing and skinning seals – *thereby meaning all seal species of all age groups* - in respective range states and, in addition,
- to assess, on the basis of current scientific knowledge including other available information on different killing and skinning practices, the most appropriate/suitable killing methods for seals which reduce as much as possible unnecessary pain, distress and suffering.

In parallel, the Commission is also looking into the management of the seal hunting in the sealing countries with a focus on trade, legal and socio-economic aspects.

Based on the results of this work, which should be available early next year, the Commission will decide whether to propose to the Council and to the European Parliament that further action be taken.

I would like to assure you that, in line with the Commission's commitment to high animal welfare standards, I will continue to give priority to this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Schally', written over a horizontal line.

Hugo SCHALLY
Head of Unit