

SAVE JAPAN DOLPHINS COALITION

ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE + EARTH ISLAND INSTITUTE + ELSA NATURE CONSERVANCY OF JAPAN + IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS



MEDIA ALERT:

DOLPHIN MEAT: THE NEW MINAMATA THREAT IN JAPAN

PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Studies have repeatedly shown that the meat of dolphins, sold in supermarkets to Japanese housewives and their families, are poisoned with mercury, at levels that exceed official health limits and higher than those found in fish that caused the Minamata disaster in Japan in the 1950's and 60's.

There will be a press conference:

**Wednesday, May 30th, 2007 at 2 PM
Captain Cook Hotel, Crows Nest Suite 2, 19th Floor,
Anchorage, Alaska, coinciding with the meeting of
the International Whaling Commission (IWC)**

Presenters:

- *Richard O'Barry, Marine Mammal Specialist, Save Japan Dolphins Coalition
- *Susan Millward, Marine Mammal Research Associate, Animal Welfare Institute
- *Mark J. Palmer, Associate Director, International Marine Mammal Project, Earth Island Institute

Background:

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Mercury is a highly toxic contaminant, found in long-lived marine mammals like dolphins that swim in coastal waters and are at the top of the food chain. A number of studies have shown very high levels of mercury poisoning in dolphin meat sold in Japan markets. Recently:

2006: On December 26, 2006, the director of food products for the Okuwa Supermarket Corporation, Mr. Yasunari Kanki, banned the sale of all dolphin meat in all of their stores. The ban is now permanent. The supermarket chain and conglomerate is comprised of drug stores, movie theatres, home store centers, sports clubs, hotels and amusement facilities.

2006: On December 22, 2006, *The Japan Times* tests a random sample of dolphin meat (iruka niku) sold at the Shingu Central Okuwa Supermarket for total mercury with a readout of 5.40 ppm -- 13.5 times higher than the maximum advisory level of 0.4ppm, set by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry of Japan.

2006: The Elsa Nature Conservancy of Japan, a member of the Save Japan Dolphins Coalition, bought two packages of short-finned pilot whale (gondou) meat at a supermarket run by the Taiji Fishery Cooperative on November 7, 2006. One package of the whale meat showed as much as 3.82ppm of mercury, which is 9.55 times higher than the maximum advisory level of 0.4ppm, set by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry of Japan. The other package of pilot whale meat showed 1.31ppm, which is 3.275 times higher than the maximum advisory level. The tests were done by the local governmental Inspection Center of Public Health in Ibaraki Prefecture.

The Japanese government, in order to promote whaling and the continued slaughter of dolphins, is ignoring the scientific evidence that dolphin meat should not be eaten, due to the very real danger of more Minamata-like outbreaks of deaths, fetal damage, and severe, permanent neuro-toxin damage to babies.

For further information on the Save Japan Dolphins Coalition effort to end the Japan dolphin slaughter, go to:

<http://www.SaveJapanDolphins.org>

VISUALS: A new DVD created for the IWC meeting, showing dolphins being slaughtered in Japan, is available to media on request.