



Ethics Over Profits: Why Yahoo! Japan must stop selling whale and dolphin products

Key Findings

Japan's hunting of whales, dolphins and porpoises

Commercial hunting of whales has been banned globally for almost four decades, after the International Whaling Commission (IWC) implemented the 1986 'moratorium'. Since this time, Japan has killed 24,899 great whales, primarily using the 'scientific' whaling loophole in the Whaling Convention. This was exposed as fraudulent by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2014, which found Japan in contravention of several provisions of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).

Since 2019, Japan's whaling has operated completely outside international governance after it left the IWC, which is the only international body mandated to manage commercial whaling. Between 2019-24, some 1,747 whales have been killed in Japan's commercial whale hunts, operating entirely outside international oversight and control.

In addition to the baleen or 'great whales' protected by the moratorium, Japan has also hunted more than 489,453 smaller whales, dolphins and porpoises (known as 'small cetaceans') since 1986.

The Government of Japan has recently approved an expansion of the hunt to catch 59 fin whales, ultimately taking 30.¹ Globally, fin whales are listed by the IUCN as Vulnerable² and have been protected since 1976 due to overhunting.³ The IWC has no agreed population estimate for North Pacific fin whales,⁴ stating that "There are insufficient data to assess their present status."⁵ Moreover, an external scientific panel set up by the Government of Japan found that a catch of 60 fin whales could cause local depletion of the population in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone.⁶

Scientists have also expressed concern about the conservation status of populations targeted in Japan's dolphin drive hunts, in particular short-finned pilot whales, bottlenose, spotted and Risso's dolphins.⁷

Yahoo Japan! Sales of whale and dolphin

Yahoo! Japan is likely the largest remaining e-commerce site continuing to sell cetacean products. Major competitors such as Rakuten and Amazon Japan and major supermarket chains in Japan do not sell cetacean products

EIA online research in 2025 using the search category ‘クジラ、鯨肉’ (whale, whale meat) revealed 963 cetacean food items on Yahoo! Japan's shopping site.⁸

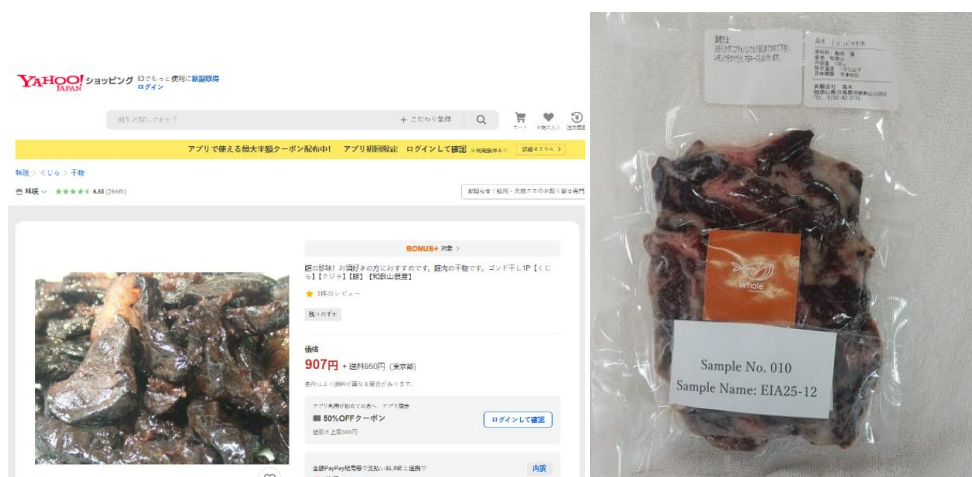
Types of products: red meat, bacon, heart, testicles, tongue, intestines, kidneys and other internal organs.

Species: Bryde's, minke, sei and fin whale, pilot whale, Baird's beaked whale, Risso's dolphin and false killer whale.

Pet food: online research revealed 58 whale pet products and treats, including “additive-free” whale heart and whale liver.⁹

Chemical analysis: 66 cetacean products were purchased from Yahoo! Japan between 2007-25 and tested by certified laboratories.

- Almost one-quarter contained mercury concentrations at a level at least 10 times higher than advisory levels set by the Government of Japan.
- The average mercury concentration in the 66 samples was 2.67 parts per million (ppm), almost seven times higher than the 0.4ppm advisory limit
- Forty one (62%) of the 66 products exceeded the mercury advisory level and 16 (24%) contained mercury concentrations at least ten times higher than the advisory level.
- According to the World Health Organisation: “Exposure to mercury – even small amounts – may cause serious health problems and is a threat to the development of the child in utero and early in life.”¹⁰



Yahoo! Japan advert for dried pilot whale from Taiji, Wakayama, sold by Ajisaku company. This product was tested in February 2015 and found to contain 19ppm mercury. The same product, tested in April 2025, contained 8.2ppm mercury, more than 20 times higher than the advisory level.¹¹

Analytical Report

Sample code Nr.	712-2025-04000048	Sample reception date:	03.04.2025
		Analysed between:	03.04.2025 - 11.04.2025
Sample described as:	EIA25-12		
Metals	Results	Unit	LOQ
YP76J YP Mercury (Hg) Method : Direct Mercury Analyzer MA-3000 Operating Manual, TDA-AAS	8.2	mg/kg	0.05

The tests identified by the two letters code YP are performed in laboratory Eurofins Food Testing Japan (Kanto).

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***** END OF REPORT *****

Yahoo! Japan, LY Corporation and other associated companies

Yahoo! Japan is a popular online service provider, ranking first in Japan for “total digital reach”, with approximately 75 million monthly active users.¹²

Yahoo! Japan is a group company of LY Corporation. A Holdings Corp., which is owned by Softbank Corp. and Naver Corp., is the largest shareholder (62.5 per cent) in LY Corporation.¹³

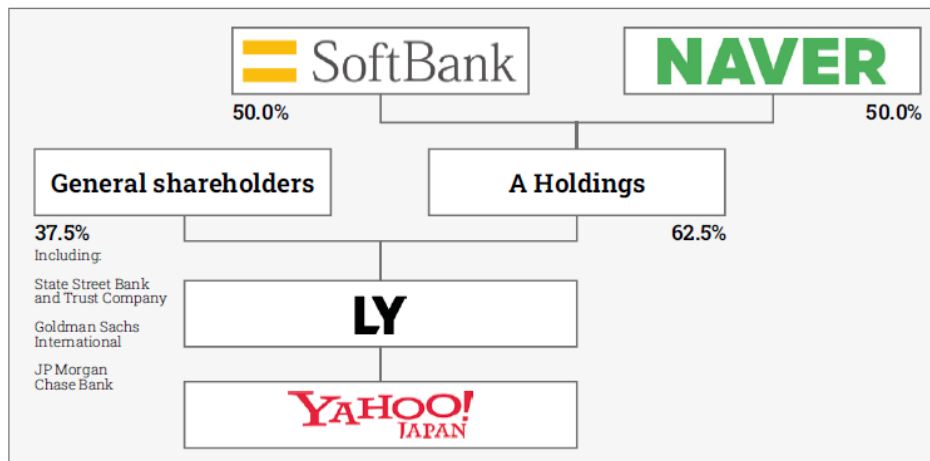


Fig 3: Corporate structure of Yahoo! Japan, a group company of LY Corporation

LY Corporation Group and its Chief Executive Officer, Takeshi Idezawa, have committed to “...give consideration to the impact that its business activities have on ecosystems” and “... fulfil our responsibility to the global environment for future generations through sustainable procurement, waste management, and conservation of water resources and biodiversity while considering the impact on ecosystems.”¹⁴

LY Corporation bans transactions of all ivory products and red list species in its e-commerce services.¹⁵

Transactions of All Ivory Products and Red List Species Banned in LY Corporation's E-Commerce Services

Yahoo! JAPAN Auction, the internet auction service operated by the Company, handles a wide variety of products to allow users to enjoy shopping and transactions. At the same time, to comply with laws and regulations, the Company has created guidelines for products that it deems inappropriate, and has operated the service in accordance with these guidelines.

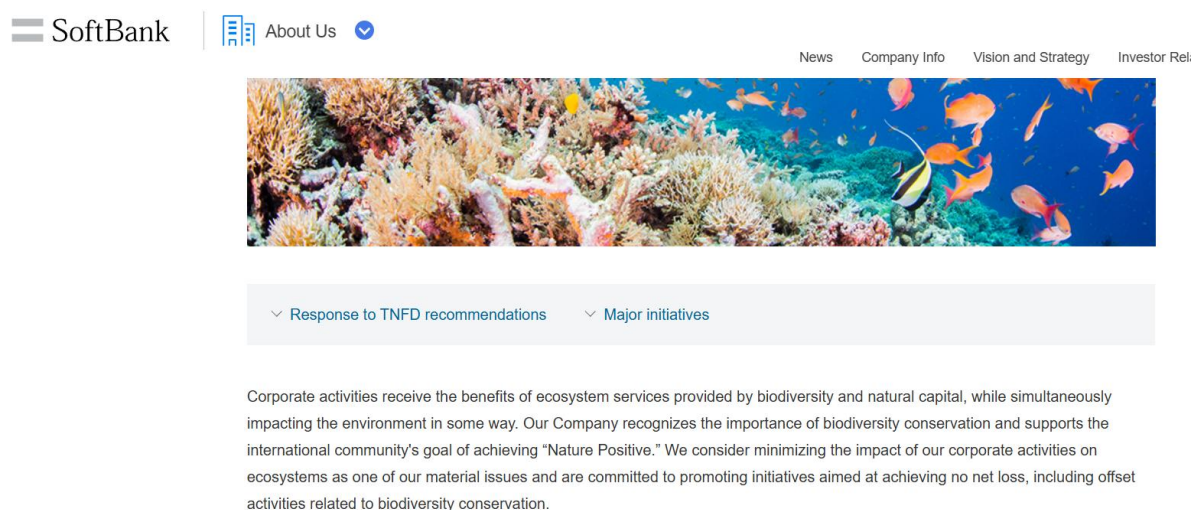
For transactions of ivory, the Company had provided transaction opportunities in Japan in compliance with the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. However, the Company confirmed multiple reports in which ivories that were traded in Japan through Yahoo! JAPAN Auction were smuggled abroad and detected by foreign customs authorities. Considering the global situation over ivory trade as well as advice from environmental groups, the Company (former Yahoo Japan) banned the transactions of all ivory products in its e-commerce services from November 1, 2019.

In addition, with regard to living creatures, while gaining the cooperation of relevant ministries and agencies of Japan, the Company has provided services to create a place where lovers of living creatures can carry out transactions. Meanwhile, it has received a variety of opinions regarding the handling of endangered species, and has continued to hold deliberations.

As a result, the Company (former Yahoo Japan) took seriously the possibility that trades in Yahoo! JAPAN Auction may affect the survival of endangered species, and has added those covered by endangered and near-threatened species on the Red List to the list of Yahoo! JAPAN Auction's prohibited items, effective September 29, 2022.

SoftBank Corp. is an operating company running hundreds of telecommunications and IT businesses, headed up by President and CEO Junichi Miyakawa. As of September 2024, SoftBank Group owns 40.17 per cent of SoftBank Corp.¹⁶

SoftBank Corp. is also an early adopter of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, which are aimed at helping companies shift global financial flows away from nature-negative outcomes and toward nature-positive outcomes.¹⁷

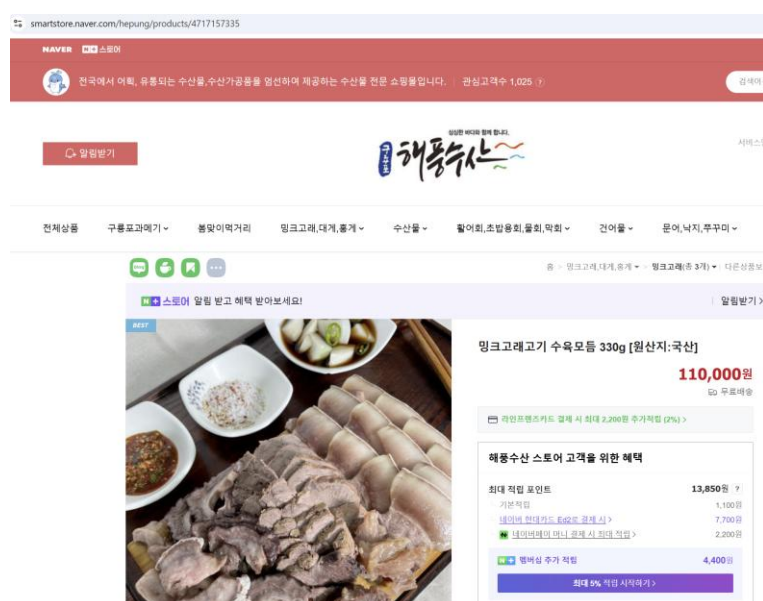


Naver Corp is South Korea's largest internet company and is best known as the operator of the country's most popular search engine, Naver.

According to its 2023 environmental policy, Naver claims that it collaborates with "major environmental groups and organisations to help the users of Naver services in gaining a better understanding and awareness of ecology and biodiversity".¹⁸

In March 2017, Naver launched its "Naver Whale" freeware Internet browser, whose logo is a cartoon whale.

Naver Corp. is promoting the sale of minke whale meat through its e-commerce platforms, with three out of seven identified vendors unable to provide certification that the whales were legally sourced from bycaught animals.¹⁹



Minke whale on sale via Naver's Smart Store e-commerce platform.²⁰

Right to Reply:

EIA and partner organisations have written to Yahoo! Japan on at least four separate occasions since 2010 to request a meeting to discuss concerns over its sale of cetacean products but received no response. In November 2024, we wrote to Takeshi Idezawa, CEO of LY Corporation, requesting his response to our assertion that Yahoo! Japan's sale of cetacean products supports the inhumane and unsustainable hunting of cetaceans, threatens biodiversity and consumer health and undermines international law and multi-lateral agreements. Again, no response was received. Similarly, letters to Naver Corp. and Softbank Corp. have not been answered.

Call to Action

Call upon LY Corporation and Yahoo! Japan, as well as key shareholders Softbank and Naver Corporations, to commit to the complete and permanent withdrawal of all cetacean products from their e-commerce sites.

📌 Share the campaign

✉ Write to LY Corporation, Yahoo! Japan, Softbank and Naver

📄 Read and share the full report: [*Ethics Over Profits – Why Yahoo! Japan must stop selling whale and dolphin products*](#)

🗣 Spread the word by sharing our social media on linked in, facebook, insta, bluesky and X.

References

¹ MAFF (2024). Catch limits for western North Pacific fin whales calculated in line with the IWC's Revised Management Procedure (RMP). RW/S23/02, 28 pp. Available [here](#) **Catch statistics for 2024.** Available [here](#)

² IUCN redlist: Fin whale, *Balaenoptera physalus*. Available [here](#)

³ NOAA (2020) Pacific marine mammal stock assessment. Available [here](#).

⁴ IWC, [Population \(Abundance\) Estimates](#) (undated).

⁵ IWC, [Introduction to Population Status](#) (undated)

⁶ Report from the external Panel requested to review the proposal from Japanese scientists for catch limits of fin whales for Japanese commercial whaling. 8 pp. Available [here](#).

⁷ Kasuya, T. & Brownell, R.L. 2023 SC/69A/SM/03 Taiji dolphin drive fishery and status of the exploited populations. Available [here](#)

⁸ <https://shopping.yahoo.co.jp/>

⁹ For example, additive free whale liver for dogs, available [here](#) and additive free whale cat treats. Available [here](#)

¹⁰ WHO (2017) Mercury and Health. Available [here](#)

¹¹ Link to Ajisaku company dried pilot whale from Taiji – see [here](#) (link only available outside EEA and UK)

¹² Top Websites in Japan, July 2024. Semrush. Available [here](#)

¹³ LY Corporation Group website, see [here](#)

¹⁴ LY Corporation Group website, see [here](#)

¹⁵ LY Corporation website, see [here](#)

¹⁶ SoftBank Corp. General Stock Information. Available [here](#)

¹⁷ List of organisations committed to making TNFD-aligned disclosures. Available [here](#).

¹⁸ Naver Corporation Environment Policy (2023). Available [here](#)

¹⁹ The Korea Times. 15 April 2025. Civic groups urge Naver to ban online sales of whale meat. [Available here](#).

²⁰ Naver Smart Store. Assorted minke whale meat. [Available here](#).