

# KILLING NATIVE SEALS

**In 1975, all seals in Australian Commonwealth and State waters became protected, following decades of commercial hunting.**

**While some populations have begun to recover, others have not.**

**Despite being a protected species, native fur seals have been subjected to relentless control by the Tasmanian salmon industry.**

**While other Australian states impose massive fines for killing seals, the same is regarded as legal ‘fishery management’ in Tasmania.**

## THE FISHING INDUSTRY, SEALS, EXPLOSIVES AND WEAPONS

The farmed fish industry uses several techniques to “deter” seals from sea-pens confining fish. Under Tasmanian regulations this may include “the use of explosives, the discharge of a projectile, or the use of a chemical substance”. Devices currently utilised include explosive charges or “crackers” that are thrown into the water and detonate below the surface, lead-filled projectiles known as “beanbags”, sedation darts, and seal “scare caps”.

In September 2021, Government documents revealed three major salmon producers had detonated over 77,000 crackers since 2018. Recently obtained documents have indicated the number of seals killed or injured due to approved deterrents is “likely to be much higher than reported”.

Unlike commercial killing, killing in conflict scenarios is rarely underpinned by rigorous or auditable monitoring. Similar outcomes have been noted in the non-commercial killing of kangaroos. As a result, there is significant potential for seal welfare to be compromised.

Though the devices described in the Regulations (and used by Tasmanian fisheries) are referred to as “deterrents”, research shows they pose a significant threat to marine life, with evidence proving these devices can cause significant injury and even death.

## NON-LETHAL DETERRENTS

Research shows that if appropriate, non-lethal exclusionary methods had been implemented prior to seals becoming reliant on fisheries as a food source, conflict between seals and aquaculture would be a rarity. As a short-term solution, these alternative methods must be implemented industry wide.

# PROTECTING PRECIOUS NATIVE SEALS

## AVOIDING THE WORST OFFENDERS

In May 2022 it was revealed that Huon Aquaculture was responsible for 75% of seal deaths at Tasmanian salmon farms over the past year, killing 18 of 23 seals killed. Data revealed the company had increased its use of underwater explosives, releasing 8,057 'seal crackers' to frighten wild animals.

To protect seals, never buy Huon-owned fish products.

## EVOLVING BEYOND AQUACULTURE

While Huon fish products are high risk for seals, Tassal and Petuna / Van Diemen are no better, also tied to major seal kills. What's more, fish farms also generate a large amount of waste, impacting the surrounding environment and ecosystem. Waste produced by fish farms spills out into the ocean, causing nitrogen pollution, which can lead to depletion of oxygen in the water and can severely stress or kill wild populations of fish.

To best protect our oceans, we need to transition away from the commercial consumption of both wild-caught and farmed fish.

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