Euthanasia of Whales and Dolphins

The information on these pages is extracted from DFO document: http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/

Checklist for Whale Euthanasia

- Does the animal meet criteria for humane destruction?
- Locate firearms and appropriate ammunition, or
- Veterinary drugs and needles, appropriate for the species.
- Individual skilled in shooting or a veterinarian will be needed.
- Consider tides, surf, access to whale, crowd control.
- Consider safe disposal of the carcass after euthanasia if drugs have been used.
- Protected natural death with palliative care is appropriate when the requirements listed above for euthanasia cannot be met.

Lateral point of aim for small whales and dolphins.

Lateral approach for intracardiac administration of euthanasia drugs. A long needle is inserted just behind and at the level of a flipper, aimed to the same point on the opposite side.

Euthanasia drug doses for whales, based on body length, for i.v. or intracardiac administration. PB=pentobarbital

Point of aim for adult Minke whale, 55-75 cm caudal to the blowhole and slightly to one side of dorsal midline.

Sedative drug doses for whales, based on body length, for intravenous or intramuscular administration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size and Number</th>
<th>Gunshot (minimum caliber)</th>
<th>Explosives</th>
<th>Chemical</th>
<th>Protected natural death with palliative care (PNDPC)</th>
<th>Likelihood of success</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one small whale</td>
<td>#2 - .222 for porpoise, dolphin; .308 for pilot whale; .375 for minke whales</td>
<td>NR³</td>
<td>#1- acepromazine, 30 minutes, then intravenous or intracardiac pentobarbital</td>
<td>not appropriate</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>chemical methods preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few small whales</td>
<td>#2 - simultaneous shooting recommended</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>#1- sedate all animals first, then euthanize in sequence</td>
<td>not appropriate</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>difficult to prevent live animals from seeing death of others or hearing gunfires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many small whales</td>
<td>#1- simultaneous shooting recommended</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>deep sedation of most animals may be possible</td>
<td>may be unavoidable</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>significant ecotoxicity may result with chemical methods; viable animals must be rescued prior to euthanasia of terminal cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one large whale</td>
<td>#2- only with training and appropriate equipment (e.g., .458 or .50 BMG)</td>
<td>#4- only with training and appropriate charges</td>
<td>#1- requires training, special needles, and large quantities of euthanasia drugs</td>
<td>#3✔⁴</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>significant ecotoxicity may result with chemical methods; gunshot possible in whales up to 12 m long; requires minimum muzzle energy of 4600 ft-lbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few large whales</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>#1- requires training, special needles, and large quantities of euthanasia drugs</td>
<td>#2✔</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>significant ecotoxicity may result with chemical methods; human safety may be a consideration with chemical method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sperm whale</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>#1✔</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>considered the most difficult species to euthanize; chemical methods may be possible; efficacy of shooting has rarely been shown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Small whales are defined as less than 8 m long, large whales as more than 8 m long.
2 #1-#4: ranking of methods for most likely circumstances, in decreasing order of preference.
3 NR - not recommended due to potential for inhumane results or low success.
4 ✔ - recommended at the present time, although euthanasia may be possible where expertise and equipment permits.