



*These South African yearling seals seem to be pleading for their lives as clubbers move in to kill them one by one. HSUS's Sue Pressman was the only non-governmental observer who witnessed this recent "harvest."*

## HSUS Presses U.S. to Uphold Ban on Importation of Sealskins

HSUS wildlife expert Sue Pressman has been the key witness opposing the importation of 70,000 South African seal pelts into the United States on the grounds that the seals were killed inhumanely.

Mrs. Pressman flew to the coast of South Africa in August to observe the clubbing to death of seals by the South African government for possible importation into the United States. She concluded that "fully 50% of the seals selected to be killed were not clubbed properly the first time, requiring a second or third blow" and that, therefore, the killing could not be considered humane.

The Fouke Fur Co. has applied to the U.S. government to waive the ban on importation of seal pelts established by the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act in order that it can process the pelts at its Greenville, S.C., plant. Two veterinarians who were sent to the site of the killing as government observers concluded that 40% of the seals were not

killed by the initial blow. Nevertheless, they concluded that the killing as a whole was humane.

"It amazes me that two parties viewing the same situation can generally agree on what they are seeing but disagree on the conclusions," Mrs. Pressman exclaimed. "Whether it was 40% or 50% that were killed incorrectly, how can the killing as a whole be considered humane?"

The U.S. Dept. of Commerce, which has responsibility for acting on the Fouke application, refused to take a position on the case and turned it over to an administrative government judge. During an extensive hearing conducted by that judge in September, Mrs. Pressman reported that in the cases where more than one blow was needed, the initial blow had stopped the animal but had not rendered it unconscious.

"The animals lay wiggling or attempting to move, and a second or third strike was necessary," she testified. "In some instances, the animal was not stopped

by the first blow and had to be clubbed again as it attempted to escape."

Mrs. Pressman's description of the seal killing made such gruesome reading that syndicated columnist Jack Anderson devoted an entire column to her report. The South African government has been teaching Bantus the method of killing seals that the U.S. government developed in a self-help economic program for the Aleuts on the U.S.-owned Pribilof Islands. The method involves hitting them on the heads with clubs to knock them unconscious, then stabbing them and slicing their vital organs.

The Dept. of Commerce upheld the ban on importing sealskins last year by turning down a Fouke request. But Fouke has had the contract for processing Pribilof Island sealskins since 1910, and the Dept. of Commerce seems more hesitant to deny their request this year.

Mrs. Pressman testified in behalf of HSUS and Monitor, a consortium of environmental and animal welfare groups. □



*Trapped from returning to the sea, this herd of seals has no choice but to proceed toward the clubbers waiting to kill them during this year's annual South African seal harvest. Mrs. Pressman concluded that 50% of the animals were not killed or knocked unconscious by the first blow and were, therefore, killed inhumanely.*

### Washington Merry-Go-Round

## 'Humane' Seal Hunt Is Bloody Business

Washington — The question of whether milady can purchase a genuine sealskin coat next season may depend upon a grisly scene in faraway Kleinzee, South Africa.

Under U. S. law, the Commerce Department is empowered to ban the importation of inhumanely killed animals. It recently sent two veterinarians to the South African coast, therefore, to witness a massive seal slaughter.

The Humane Society's Sue Pressman was invited to attend as an observer. We offer her chilling report, although it is stamped "confidential," for the enlightenment of women with sealskins:

The seal killers — some called "clubbers" carrying clubs, others called "stickers" armed with knives — maneuver themselves "between the seals and the sea . . . bunching the seals."



Jack Anderson  
with  
Les Whitten

Then the seals are herded down a lane of men who keep them "headed for the clubbers." The seals in panicky groups of four to eight rush down the lane toward the sea.

"THE FIRST BLOW was struck at 7.25 A. M. and continued for many hours — about three," wrote the horrified Mrs. Pressman. "A sloppy job was being displayed; clubs were breaking and men were taking tremendous swings in order to kill these

rather fragile seals."

The seals were only a year old and could have been killed instantly with a skillful blow. But "in only 50 percent of the cases," she reported, "would the seal be hit completely on the mark."

Half the animals, in other words, were "still wiggling, flipping." Not one of the young seals, whose pelts were sought, escaped. When one fled in terror across the piles of dead seals, the clubbers ran "onto the pile of seals, which is poor footing, (to) club a seal."

As the sun warmed and the ugly slaughter continued, "the seals began to get confused" and headed landward. But the clubbers pursued the selected victims and bashed them to death.

The older seals, whose pelts weren't wanted, left their dead babies behind and fled into the sea or clambered across "the rows of dead seals.

There they would pause and look back . . . still sitting on top of the dead bodies.

"THEN THEY WOULD LOOK down and smell what they were standing on and take off towards the sea with blood-covered flippers and underbellies . . .

"After the last animals were clubbed, the pelting began."

The two Commerce Department representatives gave the slaughter passing marks. But the Humane Society had a different opinion.

"It could not be considered humane in any way," Sue Pressman concluded in her report. "The numbers of animals slaughtered in an inhumane way were far in excess . . . The system . . . was not geared to prevent injury before death."

The final verdict will be up to the Commerce Department, which plans hearings.