

Iceland stops hunting minke whales but only for this season

August 2 2018

One of Iceland's top whaling companies says it has stopped hunting minke whales this year, in response to a new government regulation that enlarged the protected area for baleen whales.

The temporary halt to whaling comes about a month earlier than expected, Gunnar Jonsson, owner of whaling company IP-Utgerd Ltd said Thursday.

Jonsson said obeying the new rule would require sailing out further than normal to harpoon the whales and that to do so wasn't economically viable. He said his company would now focus on improving its boats for next year's whaling season.

"For next year, we will have to arrange something," he said, adding that they might hire more crew if needed.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare, or IFAW, called the development "very good news for minke whales and for Iceland," but noted the country had simply imported minke whale meat from Norway.

The temporary interruption to hunting [minke whales](#) comes about a month after another Icelandic whaling company, Hvalur HF, was condemned for killing a rare blue-fin whale hybrid. Last month, genetic testing at Iceland's Marine Research Institute confirmed the dead whale was indeed a hybrid blue-fin whale.

Blue whales, the largest species of whales on the planet, have been protected under international law for decades. The trading of blue-fin hybrid whales or any of their parts is illegal.

Kristjan Loftsson, Hvalur's owner, said the new regulation would have no impact on his company's whaling operations, which hunts [fin whales](#). He said their company's boats regularly hunt [whales](#) beyond the protected sanctuary and would continue as normal. He acknowledged their inadvertent killing of a blue-fin whale hybrid but said there had been no way to tell the difference before [genetic testing](#) was done.

IFAW said it would continue to campaign against whaling, calling it "cruel, wasteful and unnecessary."

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