

## Sans titre

Russia Joins Fray at WTO Over EU Ban on Seal Products

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TORONTO, CANADA, Nov 05 (MARKET WIRE) --

Russia has officially requested Third Party status at the ongoing WTO case against the EU ban on seal products. This development was welcomed today by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW - [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)).

"Europeans and Russians are united in their abhorrence for commercial seal hunting. Banning products from commercial hunts is the only way the citizens can be assured they are not buying products obtained through cruelty," said Barbara Slee, IFAW Seals Campaigner. "Russian Prime Minister Putin has made his feelings clear on seal hunting and it is good to see Russia joining the WTO case to support the EU ban."

Russia introduced its own ban on sealing in 2009 and a ban on the trade in seal products in 2011. In 2009, Vladimir Putin called commercial sealing a "bloodthirsty industry," saying the practice "should have been stopped years ago."

The EU has previously made it clear that it will "vigorously defend" the values of European citizens in the face of a WTO challenge. The seal trade ban legislation was drafted with a view to ensuring it complies with all of the EU's international obligations.

"Canada's claims that commercial sealing is conducted humanely are neither supported by the video footage taken at the hunt nor by veterinary studies," noted Sheryl Fink, Director of IFAW's seal program. "This development shows that Russia is also concerned about its ability to protect the key values of its citizens. Russia's involvement will increase scrutiny on this case, and we hope the panel will deliver a ruling that respects the wishes of WTO members to implement domestic restrictions on products derived from unethical practices."

A compilation video of examples of cruelty from the 2011 Canadian commercial seal hunt can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj4c1eBblQ0>. Since the ban came into effect, a compelling video of cruelty infractions has also come to light in Norway. The footage was taken in 2009 by a Norwegian government sealing inspector who subsequently faced threats for actually reporting the infractions.

Notes:

High resolution images from the Canadian commercial seal hunt, the May 5th, 2009 vote in Strasbourg when MEPs voted in favour of the EU seal ban and images of Harp seals are available at [www.ifawimages.com](http://www.ifawimages.com)

The ban on the trade in seal products entered into force on 20 November 2009.

This announcement follows the publication of the new legislation in the EU's Official Journal on 31 October 2009. The Regulation 1007/2009 is set to enter into force 20 days following publication. In practical terms full enforcement only began on 20 August 2010.

The EU ban on seal products is targeted at commercial seal hunts. The largest three commercial seal hunts globally are in Canada, Norway and Namibia.

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There is an exemption in the EU legislation for Inuit and subsistence hunting of seals.

Canada and Norway both signalled prior to the commencement of the EU ban that they would enter a challenge at the WTO. Formal consultations at the WTO began in November 2009.

A study by veterinarians Andrew Butterworth and Mary Richardson recently published in the journal Marine Policy confirms that commercial sealing is inherently inhumane, and that humane killing procedures cannot be respected in the context of commercial seal hunts.

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