

Each whitecoat has about forty pounds of fat, or blubber, which is used for oil. The flippers are a delicacy in Newfoundland.

From 1972 to 1976 large vessels were barred from the Gulf, and few whitecoats were taken. The herd built up, and Gulf permits have been issued for vessels manned by sealers from the Magdalen Islands—an area where landsmen normally hunt whitecoats but where the hunt has been unsuccessful in recent years.

Most landsmen take beaters (older than whitecoats but under one year old) and bedlamers (immature seals over one year old). They reach the ice on foot or in small vessels. Most use the meat as well as the fur, flippers and oil. The natives of the Canadian Arctic and Greenland also take older seals which are used for food, clothing and trade.

The hunting days are few: The birthing season is short, and the Canadian government sets a strict quota. The quota for all harp seals this year is 180,000 of which 20,000 is reserved for Norwegian vessels and 10,000 for Inuit hunters. Quotas are rarely obtained, and in any event are set far below the total pup production (345,000—358,000).

"The current population of harp seals could stand an annual catch of 214,000 to 240,000 animals and still enough young seals would enter the herds to replace the adults that die due to natural causes, and we are allowing a

harvest of 180,000 animals," says M. C. Mercer, Associate Director of the Fisheries Research Branch in Ottawa.

"We want the harp seal herds to increase to 1.6 million animals," says Mercer. "That is why the seal quotas are set at 180,000 instead of the permissible 214,000. We expect that the seal herds will number the 1.6 million animals within five to ten years."

The harp and hooded seal harvest in Canadian waters is controlled by comprehensive Seal Protection Regulations. Each of Canada's large sealing vessels has fishery officers on board to maintain close surveillance on the sealers to ensure that the quotas on numbers of seals taken are not surpassed and that all other regulations are obeyed.

All sealers must be licensed. Before the licensing, they are given lectures and instructions on sealing regulations, particularly on methods of humane killing. All novice sealers must serve an apprenticeship with experienced men. The fishery officers have the power to suspend the licence of any sealer and remove him from the ice if the officer believes that the sealer has violated the regulations.

As a result, "...the harp seal is very probably the best managed wildlife species in Canada," says Dr. Fred Gilbert, professor of wildlife management at the University of Guelph.

