



# KILLING FOR COMMERCE

## Yahoo! fails to stop the sale of endangered and threatened whales & dolphins

**Yahoo! Inc, via its Japanese subsidiary Yahoo! Japan, continues to operate as an important corporate facilitator of the commercial trade in whale and dolphin products in Japan. Yahoo! Japan offers fee-based services to whale and dolphin product retailers on its 'stores' and 'auction' sites.**

Although Yahoo! has banned cetacean and other endangered wildlife products from all its websites except for Japan, there is no evidence it has made any significant effort to persuade its Japanese subsidiary to end these sales, which are derived from endangered and internationally protected species.

Yahoo! facilitates and profits from the killing of these species via sales of whale and dolphin products by Yahoo! Japan.

In March 2012, a search for "whale" on [www.store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp](http://www.store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp) showed 249 individual whale products for sale. Many of these products originate from great whales, namely fin, sei, minke, sperm and Bryde's whale, which are all protected species under the moratorium on commercial whaling established by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) since 1986. These whale species are also afforded the highest level of protection by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which prohibits international trade. Despite this,



Whale products available via Yahoo! Japan © EIA

seven individual companies were selling endangered fin whale, imported from Iceland, through Yahoo! Japan.<sup>1</sup>

Many products were toothed cetacean species (known as 'small cetaceans'), namely Baird's beaked whales and pilot whales. Sixteen products were labelled as originating from Taiji or Wakayama, where the infamous



Whale bacon for sale via Yahoo! Japan

dolphin and whale drive hunts exposed in *The Cove* take place. Despite international protest, the drive hunts continue to subject thousands of dolphins and whales to brutally inhumane killing methods. Recent video footage shows clearly that the Taiji hunters are not interested in improving the killing methods, but seek only to hide the kill.<sup>2</sup>

Although no products available for sale by Yahoo! Japan in March 2012 were described as dolphin, a total of 34 products did not include a description of the species of whale being sold, contrary to the requirements of

Japan's labelling laws. These products could therefore be dolphin or whale species, and it is highly likely that at least some of the 16 products labelled as originating from Taiji are dolphin products, given that hundreds of dolphins are killed there each year.<sup>3</sup>

The products ranged in price from 150 yen (US\$1.86) to 31,500 yen (US\$398.21). The cheapest product on sale was Baird's beaked whale croquets.<sup>4</sup> The most expensive product was a variety set of whale meat and whale sashimi (2.6kg), sold by Iwatani-i-collect for 31,500 yen.<sup>5</sup>

## MERCURY RISING

In February 2011, the Environmental Investigation Agency purchased 10 cetacean products from Yahoo! Japan shopping stores. Tissue analysis was performed to determine presence and concentration of mercury (Hg) by VisionBio, an ISO/IEC 17025-accredited testing laboratory based in Fukuoka, Japan.<sup>6</sup>

Half of the samples purchased exceeded Japanese national limits for total mercury concentration of 0.4 parts per million (ppm).<sup>7</sup> The most polluted sample was dried pilot whale, which had a mercury concentration of 6.5ppm, more than 16 times higher than the Japanese regulatory limit. The average mercury level in the eight products was 1.44ppm, more than three-and-a-half times higher than the provisional regulatory limit.

Three of the products were not described with a species name, despite Japan's labelling legislation requiring all cetacean products to



list the common name of the species and geographic origin. DNA analysis of the products was successfully carried out for five products, revealing that a whale bacon product labelled as pilot whale was actually Risso's dolphin, and therefore mislabelled. The DNA analysis also showed one product sold as "fin whale bacon from Iceland" was in fact southern ocean minke whale.

**TABLE: SUMMARY OF TEST RESULTS ON 10 PRODUCTS PURCHASED VIA YAHOO! JAPAN**

<b>Product name</b>	<b>Species labelled</b>	<b>Mercury concentration (ppm)</b>	<b>Species identified by DNA analysis</b>
<b>Whale bacon</b>	<b>Pilot whale</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>Risso's dolphin</b>
<b>Dried pilot whale</b>	<b>Pilot whale</b>	<b>6.50</b>	
<b>Whale stew</b>	<b>Minke whale</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>NP minke</b>
<b>Fried whale meat</b>	<b>Baird's beaked whale</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>Baird's beaked whale</b>
<b>Canned whale</b>	<b>Baird's beaked whale</b>	<b>0.89</b>	
<b>Whale bacon</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>0.31</b>	
<b>Fried whale</b>	<b>NW Pacific minke</b>	<b>&lt; 0.10</b>	<b>Southern minke</b>
<b>Taiji whale dinner</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>4.40</b>	
<b>Fin whale bacon</b>	<b>Fin whale from Iceland</b>	<b>&lt; 0.10</b>	<b>Southern minke</b>
<b>Canned whale stew</b>	<b>Baird's beaked whale</b>	<b>0.22</b>	

**Average mercury (Hg) concentration over 10 products = 1.44ppm. Government 'safe' limit for seafood = 0.4ppm**

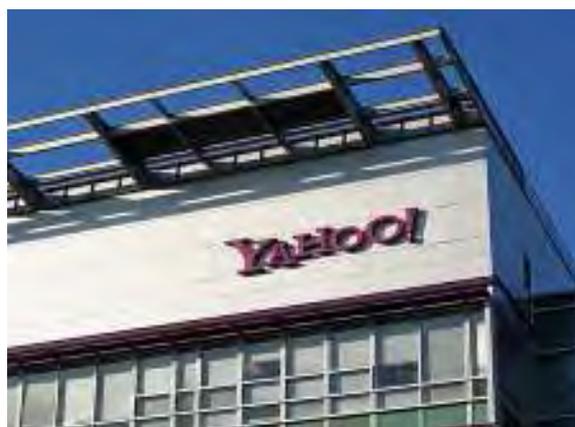
## CONCLUSIONS

Yahoo! Inc continues to ignore international protests against the sale of whale and dolphin products via its Japanese website.

Yahoo! Inc, via its 34.75 per cent share of Yahoo! Japan, continues to profit from the slaughter of whales and dolphins.

As Yahoo! directly profits from Yahoo! Japan's sales of whale and dolphin products, it is responsible not only for facilitating the sale of products from endangered and protected species but also for allowing the sale of mislabelled food products which are highly contaminated with mercury and a potential health threat to the people consuming them.

In recent years, international condemnation of Japan's whale and dolphin hunts, along with concerns about pollution and food safety, have led Japan's leading supermarket chains and retailers - AEON, Ito-Yokado,



Seiyu, Amazon and Uny - to prohibit the sale of whale or dolphin products in their thousands of stores. Japan's leading seafood companies, Maruha, Kyokuyo and Nippon Suisan, have all ended the production of canned whale meat and other frozen whale products.

# CALL TO ACTION

Yahoo! headquarters in Sunnyvale, California must take responsibility for persuading Yahoo! Japan to end all sales of whale and dolphin products, using the full powers of its large shareholding in its Japanese subsidiary.

Yahoo! must acknowledge that it is directly profiting from the sale of whale or dolphin products which are so contaminated with mercury that they pose a serious health threat to people consuming them, and particularly to unborn children.

Yahoo! should take action to end all sales

of whale, dolphin and porpoise products, as Amazon recently did.

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is calling on Yahoo!'s new CEO, Scott Thompson, to end the sale of all whale, dolphin and porpoise products by its Japanese subsidiary.

EIA and its campaign allies call on everybody who cares about whales, dolphins and porpoises to support the campaign and urge Yahoo! and its global affiliates and subsidiaries to permanently and immediately ban the sale of all whale, dolphin and porpoise products.

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<sup>2</sup> Video footage of the current killing method was taken by [atlanticblue.de](http://atlanticblue.de) and can be seen

at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pPZIA2c1HQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pPZIA2c1HQ&feature=related)

<sup>3</sup> For recent catch statistics, see [www.cetabase.com/drivefisheries.html](http://www.cetabase.com/drivefisheries.html)

<sup>4</sup> [store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp/hakudai/yh-e-28-1-1.html](http://store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp/hakudai/yh-e-28-1-1.html)

<sup>5</sup> [store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp/i-collect/1112214.html](http://store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp/i-collect/1112214.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.visionbio.co.jp/global/>

<sup>7</sup> Provisional Regulatory limit of Mercury in Seafood 23/07/1973. Director-General of Environmental Health Bureau. Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare, Notification No 99 KanNyu