

No changes planned in walrus rules

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Division has announced that no major changes are planned for enforcement activity during the 1990 walrus hunting season.

Citing a good level of voluntary compliance and an existing spirit of mutual cooperation, law enforcement officials advise that special agents will again be making random spot checks of returning hunters on the beach areas.

They reminded hunters that the killing of walrus just for ivory is against the law. They said this practice by some hunters in the past has caused a lot of public criticism against all hunters.

Agency spokesmen said the Fish and Wildlife Service will prosecute people who take only the ivory, protecting the majority of the hunters who obey the law.

Other persons who hunt walrus illegally, such as non-Native hunters, also will be cited, and any

ivory found will be seized.

Federal regulations allow the taking of walrus by Alaska Natives for subsistence as long as it is done without waste. Alaska Natives are allowed to use the byproducts of these animals for the creation of traditional Native arts and handicrafts for sale. Raw ivory must not be sold to non-Natives.

Non-Natives are not allowed to hunt or take part in the hunt for marine mammals.

Also non-Natives cannot buy, sell, barter or possess raw marine mammal parts such as walrus ivory without special permits from the U.S. government. There are special provisions for bones and ivory found on the beach, state tagged ivory and items obtained before December, 1972.

Any person may purchase edible portions of marine mammals sold in Alaska Native villages or towns.

Agreements made several years ago between hunters and federal agents re-

quire hunters to return with at least the heart, liver, flippers, coak and some red meat of each walrus killed.

Individual hunter needs will allow for substitution of some parts of meat for others, but as much of the edible portions of each walrus as possible should be brought back.

Regulations issued in 1988 also require the hunter to bring back the ivory from each walrus killed.

The ivory must be marked and tagged by the Fish and Wildlife Service or a representative within 30 days of the kill. If only the ivory is brought

back, the hunter could be cited into court and would face seizure of the ivory.

Special agents will make checks of returning boats and hunters at various times and locations during the season.

Meetings will be held with various hunter groups prior to the hunting season to further explain the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Any questions or suggestions are welcome, and interested persons are asked to contact Special Agents Tim Eicher or Al Cane in Fairbanks at 456-0255.