

Pribilof Fur Seals Being Killed Off By Sea Debris

(From ALASKA on ALASKA)

The National Marine Fisheries Service and fur seal experts are concerned about the increase of death and injury among fur seals caused by scraps of fishing nets and other debris tossed overboard by careless commercial fishermen.

Compounding the problem is the development of synthetic, nonbiodegradable fibers and their widespread use in fishing nets. Both the United States and Canada are preparing a pamphlet that will be distributed soon to West Coast fishermen to explaining the problem and urging the fishermen to discard their used netting ashore.

Some recent fisheries treaties also include stipulations that foreign fishing fleets will not discard debris at sea. The National Marine Fisheries Service said the proportion of seal entanglements caused by plastic bands has climbed from none in 1969 to more than 30 per cent last year among seals returning to the Pribilof Islands of Alaska.

The Pribilofs are home to the largest fur seal herd in the world.