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MEDIA RELEASE

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ADULT FEMALE MINKES NEARLY ALL PREGNANT

A scientific paper from Japan's Antarctic research program shows that almost 95 percent of adult Antarctic minke females are pregnant during the summer feeding months in the Southern Ocean.

Research from the program has shown that the Antarctic minke population has a 93.8 percent pregnancy rate among adult female minke whales.

"This is very significant because it demonstrates the population is robust," the Director-General of the Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo, Dr Hiroshi Hatanaka, said today. "The Antarctic minke whale reproduces consistently every year. Such high productivity demonstrates that the population is certainly well able to sustain a commercial hunt."

"The sampling of pregnant whales are taken into account under the JARPA II research program, in line with the International Whaling Commission's Revised Management Procedure, which is a risk-averse method for calculating sustainable catch quotas," Dr Hatanaka said.

In 1990, the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee agreed an abundance estimate of 760,000 Antarctic minke whales. That figure is currently under review but even if the abundance estimate was halved, the taking of 853 minke whales poses no risk to the stock.

"The world is realising that there is no need or reason to prevent sustainable commercial whaling in the Antarctic under IWC management procedure and Australia may find itself standing alone while the rest of world moves on," Dr Hatanaka said.

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