

TWITCH-WHISKER HUNT COMPREHENSION

In Iceberg it mentions that seals “twitch-whisker hunt”. Use the information below to help you answer questions about seals and how they use their whiskers to detect and hunt for fish.

Scientists have discovered that seals don't just rely on their large eyes and hearing when hunting. According to the Natural History Museum, seals have highly sensitive whiskers that enable them to hunt effectively even in poor visual conditions.

A seal's whiskers are made up of thick wavy wiry hairs with nerve endings at the base, making them very sensitive to any movement. While whiskers can be used to touch and examine something, a marine animal like a seal uses them to detect vibrations in the water. When tracking underwater vibrations, the seal pulls its whiskers away from its face to allow it to detect the disturbances in the water caused by passing fish.

According to the BBC, scientists believe that seals may be able to detect fish up to 100m away using only their whiskers. In experiments described in the Journal of Experimental Biology, seals were able to correctly indicate if a fish had swum to the right or the left up to 35 seconds after the movement had stopped.

This is similar to the performance of whales and dolphins which use echolocation to the point that seals seem to be able to discriminate between different species of fish based on their shape and pattern of movement.

In your own words describe a seal's whiskers:

In your own words explain how seals can detect fish:

English: ACELY1970 - Use comprehension strategies to analyse texts.

